



Irene Owen Audreuz  
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**THE LAND THEY LOVED**



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# THE LAND THEY LOVED

BY  
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TO  
H. AND F.

TWO IRISHMEN WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN  
GALLIPOLI AND FRANCE

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# THE LAND THEY LOVED

## CHAPTER I

IT was a windy morning and the steamer lurched heavily as it broke its way through the menacing furrows of the sea. There were no passengers on deck at that cold early hour, and Kate Carmody, when she struggled up the companion-way and viewed the empty steerage, was pleased at the thought that hers would be a solitary watch for the land.

Slipping and almost falling once or twice she picked her way across the deck. Then having got a firm hold of the handrail she gazed out over the leaden expanse of water. She was feeling very excited, and her heart beat with such a mad wild throb she found it hard to keep her eyes fixed on the horizon's edge. It was strange to think that in a few minutes' time Ireland would appear out of the mists and that in two days or so she would be driving through Droumavalla on a side-car — driving home. There'd be Denis, her half-brother, feeding the calves, maybe, as she drove up to the farm, and he would just drop his bucket and say, "Here's Kate come back, and not a bit changed." Denis would be glad to see her and she would be glad to see him, glad to see the old fields, the wide yard, the outbuildings, and,

best of all, the white square house. Five years was a long time to spend in the States without sight of your own people and your own land. Good wages, strange and wonderful sights, all the novelty of a new life did not quite make up for that gap in the years. Yet Kate would not have missed such an experience for the most prosperous farm in Ireland. She had had her ups and downs, and had had to face privations, temptations, hard work and long hours; on the whole she had been fairly happy, but never in her life had she been so happy as now when she was turning her face towards home.

It would be near harvest-time and Denis would be glad of an extra hand. She had always been a great one for pitching hay and corn on to the carts and for following the binder. She felt sure it would come quite easy to her again, in spite of her want of practice, for she possessed endurance and strength beyond the ordinary. The memory of old forgotten times came drifting back to her from the outlying spaces of her mind as she watched and waited now. The long line of workers stooping and rising, the rustle of dry hay under her hand, the beating of strong sun and rain in her face, the race against time, the fear in their hearts, the ominous banking up of black clouds in the west, the glow of exhaustion, of the race won, the storm of rain just when the stooks were saved beating upon her and drenching her through. She was going home to that; her heart leaped with joy at the thought.

Ah! the first day of harvest would be fine, she



assured herself. She would work without stopping to take breath, and only when her lips were stuck together with the drought would she draw off to take a long cool drink of cold tea from the can. Then she would go on again. Oh! she would sweat seven skins off her that day and be as stiff as an old hound by nightfall. Then best of all would be the meeting of friends in the village, the boys she had grown up with standing at the cross-roads, the joking and "funning" with them, the jigging and dancing in the barn, all the old times and tricks back again.

Gradually the vision passed and Kate was cognisant of the dull sea and sky, of a fine drizzle that was penetrating her coat, and of the bitter sting of the wind. But still she held on to the rail, gazing anxiously over the waves, her tall, straight figure bending and swaying a little with each motion of the vessel.

She was nearly five foot eight in height, with handsome regular features and a stately carriage that seems to be the natural heritage of so many Irish peasant-women, and which had been intensified in her case by her father's admonitions. "A straight back, Kate, will give you a bit of pride. There's nothing better than a straight back and you going through the world." She had not forgotten his words and was as erect as a soldier on parade without his rigidity. For with this straightness of carriage there was a looseness of limb, a certain deft grace in all her movements that made her a remarkable figure in a crowded street.

She had been earning good wages in America and her mistress had promised to raise them, but for some time past she had felt restless and dissatisfied, and one afternoon on the impulse of the moment had gone to the steamship office and booked her passage home. There was a craving in her blood for the fields and wide spaces, and the sight of old faces, the sound of old voices were a part of that desire. It did not, however, quite explain her hasty action in throwing up a good job and prospects of saving. Behind all that was the feeling that she had not yet found what she wanted. She was aware of a queer inarticulate desire that she could not even express to herself, that it did not seem possible to satisfy in America. Perhaps it was the urgings of the spirit of adventure, the spirit that had originally drawn her to a new world and was not yet sated, and coupled with it was the wish to feel that she was her own mistress again as in the old barefooted days at the farm.

Kate had a healthy appreciation of independence and the delights of being one's own mistress. It had been an incentive in driving her across the seas from Ireland to the West. For when her father died, though she had got her share of land, the house had gone to her half-brother Denis. He had pressed her to live on with him; she had refused: he would be getting married soon she was sure and what would her position be then? Besides, her cousins had written and told her America was the only place for a smart girl like her. Poor prices were the rule for farm produce.

No self-respecting woman could stay at home scraping a living under the circumstances. She might have got married, there had been more than one offer, but Kate had a wild free spirit and she didn't see her way to tying herself up to any one at that time.

She had never fallen in love with any man. She could not imagine herself in such a helpless condition and believed she had too much common sense to fall a victim to such foolery. Yet she liked men's company. She liked to look at them; she appreciated their size and weight. She was also interested in their minds. They weren't like a lot of cackling women always picking holes in each other; they took a broad general view of life and would talk learnedly about politics. They studied the evening paper and got their views from it. Women never read the paper; women had no sense or reason in them.

Denis had not married — possibly because there were very few girls in Droumavalla. As in many other parts of Ireland, they either emigrate, go into service in Dublin and other cities, or enter a convent. Denis was something of Kate's make, and a faithful affection without passion was all that was possible in his nature. It was pleasant to feel he was still in a sense her possession because he was still unwed. And then there were his three great friends, Michael, Steve and Eugene Turpin. Eugene had been her own age, and so it had been her habit to regard him merely as a boy and have little to do with him. But the other

two had counted for much in her life. She had watched them at hurley matches and taken pride in the vast sweep of their cumauns, and many a dance she had footed through with them. They had both been after her, each confident he would succeed. And she remembered her brother's words: "Kate, is it! Let me tell you if it's Kate you're after you'll find a white blackbird that never flew yet." And so it was, she had surprised them all, for in the heel she had given them both the slip, making off to America.

Denis, Michael, Steve and Eugene! A glow of tenderness filled her heart. Oh, it would be good to be seeing those fine men again. There had been none like them in America, none to match them in their clear blue eyes, fine shoulders, great strength and weight. Her eyes filled with tears of pleasure at the thought of seeing them and joking with them, at the thought of going back to the old free life on the farm.

The clouds lifted a little, a ghostly light broke through that seemed to soften the wind and draw the sting from it. To the northeast appeared a dark streak of land that was without any definite outline, without any light or shade, and like a black bold streak of charcoal edged the horizon line. Kate caught in her breath with a sudden gasp of joy, and then she laughed aloud. Ireland was over there, and in two days' time she would be driving down the High Street of Droumavalla — driving home.



## CHAPTER II

THE sun had begun to set as Kate drove up to Rathmore; and the white house was all in a pale glow under its rays. The shadows were creeping up the oats field in front of the farm, the hovering light streaking the heavy heads here and there with a fantastic fire. Kate was in ecstasy and could scarcely speak from emotion. The familiar hills, the little village, the green and gold pastures, old people standing at the half-doors of their cottages, wrinkled friendly faces she had known since childhood, were each in turn a fresh joy to her, and here was Denis on the doorstep, a touch of grey in his hair, the slimness of youth gone from him, but with the same straight figure, the same kindly eyes.

"A welcome before you, Kate," he said, and grasped her by the hand; "you're looking fine and we have been missing you sorely."

His few simple words caused her to give a little shiver of pleasure, and as she muttered a half-incoherent reply her Aunt Maggie, who kept house for Denis, hobbled past him, taking her other hand, crying out, "It's Kate — as sure as God is in His Heaven it's Kate. Oh, it takes the tear out of my eye to be seeing you, achree."

"It's the best day in my life, Kate," he said. "Oh, I was afeared you'd never come back to the old place again. And you're not a bit changed.

You're yourself and no one else. But why didn't you tell me the train you was coming by? If I'd put the day to it I'd have been there in Cork to meet you."

"I guess I knew that, Denis," she replied softly. "Oh, I wouldn't have you waste a day on me and the harvest not saved."

He wrung her hand again and drew back, gazing at her admiringly, exclaiming at her smartness, marvelling at the few changes in her appearance, telling her that she was the same Kate as ever, and that every day since she had left five years before he had been wanting her, looking for her and missing her voice, her step, her laugh through the house. Old Maggie kept up a chorus in the background, hobbling round her with exclamations of admiration, crowing with joy and clapping her hands. Suddenly, they seemed to realise that she must be tired, in need of a rest and food. So they hurried her into the kitchen, helped her off with her hat and coat, both of them talking and laughing together; and she turned from the one to the other in happy confusion. Their welcome made her feel as if she had only gone away yesterday, as if there were no gap in the years at all.

"You must be starved with the hunger," said Denis, rushing to the dresser and groping about for cups and saucers.

"I could eat the horns off a cow," she confessed.

"Would you like a feed of fish?" he inquired, rummaging about for knives and forks. "There was a fresh catch in to-day."

"I could drink a bowl of tea," she admitted. "I'm dying for tea."

"Ah, Denis, let them knives and forks be," protested the aunt, who was at the fire busy with the kettle; "it's two fresh eggs she will have and a nice cream cake I'm after baking for her. Look now, did you ever see better in all them grand places in America?"

A round crusty loaf was produced in triumph from the cupboard, and in a couple of minutes Kate was drinking hot sweet tea and chipping the shell off a brown egg.

They watched her with delighted interest, old Maggie heaping up her plate and exclaiming, "Have another bitteen of the cream cake now, Kate. You haven't a pick on you. Let you not be stinting yourself. Sure I'd a good tooth and a relish for food and I your age."

Denis had as much as he could do to answer his sister's questions about himself and his farming operations.

"Times have greatly changed," he was saying; "you wouldn't know the farm and the good land that's in it now. Maybe you'll remember I was ever and always in debt no matter what way I'd be saving and scraping and working. For twenty years I was a borrower, and now in the end of all I'm saving. I have a hundred pounds in the Munster Bank, and for the first time in twenty years my mind is at ease. Oh, the prices for cattle and crops would surprise you. There are springers going for forty-five pounds and fifty pounds, and young calves three weeks old for two

pounds ten. A bull calf you'd be thankful to get five shillings for on the day of its birth you'd get two pounds for now without the least bit of trouble in the world."

Denis continued to roll out farming statistics, describing in detail the gradual rise in prices during the two years of war and his own gradual release from a load of money cares. With each fresh figure Kate exclaimed, "Oh, Lord, it's dangerous!" And when she learnt how the last small overdraft at the bank was cleared off by the sale of the mangels for a price unequalled in the memory of man she drew back her chair from the table exclaiming, "I'm thinking the end of the world is coming with Rathmore Farm freed from debt."

"There's more than the end of the world coming," chuckled old Maggie; "wait till you hear what Denis is after doing."

"Ah, can't you whist, Maggie?" Denis grinned fatuously, and then turned away to the window, a dark flush spreading across his face.

"What is it at all?" Kate eyed the two wonderingly.

"I couldn't tell you," he choked; "you'd be in roars laughing at me."

She rose and went over to him, and putting her hand on his shoulder compelled him to face her, saying peremptorily, "Own up now, Denis — own up."

"I'm going to be married," he confessed with a cough and another blush; "it's to Minnie Foley."



“Minnie Foley!” Kate exclaimed, and took his two hands in hers, wringing them hard. “Well, Denis, I’m glad in my heart to hear it. But what a pity you wouldn’t do it fifteen years back. Didn’t I make the match then and didn’t you turn from it, kicking up your hoofs at it like a young colt?”

“I wouldn’t bring any woman into a house with a heavy debt hanging over it,” he replied. “She hadn’t a bit in the world herself. Now her father is after dying she has a nice streak of land beyond Gurtnagappal.”

At this point he made a hasty excuse about odds and ends of work and retired precipitously from the kitchen.

Kate went out a few minutes later. She thought she would like a stroll by herself, she wanted to get accustomed to her home again; and she experienced a curious confusion of pain and pleasure as she wandered from field to field, noting old landmarks, marking where trees had fallen, where land had been drained, and calling to mind old games, old faces and old follies. It was very pleasant to her to perceive how much the farm had improved and to know that Denis was at last free to marry. Gradually, the peace, prosperity and content of everything soothed her spirit, and a deep sure happiness was hers as she mounted the hill and stood again in front of the farmhouse. She faced round to the south, looking across the valley over the woods of Kilcool to the hills beyond. It was one of those long summer evenings in Ireland when it seems as if the

light can never die. The world had toned down to a soft silvery shade, though there was still a faint flush in the sky, and every object stood out as clearly as if it was day. There were fat cattle to the left browsing in a field where the grass had lost its spring sweetness, a sweetness sucked by summer sun: in front of the house stretched a field of oats, the long stems waving and bending in the evening breeze; beyond it was another field dotted here and there with haystacks, and beyond it again a dark fringe of trees and a gleam of water. Kate knelt down and took up a little earth, cradling it for a moment in the palms of her hands and then letting it slip slowly through her fingers. Ah! how she loved the land; how she could work and be its slave; how she longed to live and die near it, away from hot streets, away from the hard pavements, away from the interminable miles of houses. This was what she had come back for, this was all she desired.

As the knowledge sank into her mind she rose from the ground, throwing away the last few grains of earth. What way could she live in Droumavalla? She had sold her share of land when she went to America, cast away her claim to the earth. What matter? She could not work it alone; and with this thought there came a memory of Steve and Michael and of Coomacarn Farm, their home. She wondered had they changed. It was unlikely; Denis was in no way changed. It was only a short time since she had seen them; five years counted for little, they would

surely be the same as when she had given them the slip and made off to America.

"Kate — Kate — where are you at all, at all?" Denis was calling her from the yard.

She turned towards it, her mind full of Steve and Michael, and the thought of those two strong men now brought a colour to her cheeks and a queer throbbing to her heart. Maybe the time had come for her to make her choice at last.

Denis, old Maggie and Kate sat up till late that night though a rick of hay had to be built on the morrow. The hours stole by without their heeding them, there was so much to tell, so many miles they had not footed together and over which they must travel now in intimate talk. Kate described her life in America in minute detail, and Denis in his turn, backed by reminders from Maggie, gave an account of his life which was largely the history of the farm. He made the round of all the seasons, relating the various vicissitudes through which it had passed, and ending up with a short description of his courting.

"Isn't it a wonder she'd take an old fellow near fifty the likes of me?" he said.

"No wonder at all," protested Kate. "Indeed Minnie Foley is the lucky girl. You're not a rollicking fellow and you'll give her fine graceful living. But I never had a thought you was sparky. That's what kills me."

"There's an old saying you mustn't take the book by the cover," put in Maggie.

"Sparky, is it?" laughed Denis. "Indeed

then, you're mistaken, Kate. I'm not in love — not a bit in the world. I am marrying Minnie because she matches me fine. She has good knowledge of milk and butter and she's a grand woman for hens. Up there at Gurtnagappal, the time her old father was living, the eggs were spread out like gravel before her in the hen-house and the boxes! Oh, Lord, save my soul, the boxes she'd send away full of them!"

"Ah, ha! I can tell what way it is from your speech. I'll engage you have a great care for her."

"Oh, not so great at all, but she matches my tackle. I'm not like them young lads that are growing up with their fancy talk about breaking hearts and love and all that raumeish. Sure, love is nothing but insanity."

Kate lifted her head and looked across at her brother reflectively. "Love is no insanity," she replied after a pause.

"And where did you learn that?" he inquired in a half-joking manner.

"I —" she hesitated — "I learned it in the States."

"Was there one out there, Kate?" His voice was serious now.

"Not a one, but I learned it all the same."

There was silence for a few minutes while Denis gazed across at his sister, a little puzzled frown gathering on his open forehead. Kate became conscious of his look and of the sudden quiet, the first that had fallen on the party, and she turned nervously to Maggie, saying:



"Tell me about the Cantys now. Did John emigrate, I wonder? I mind he was a wild lad and a great spree boy for all he had a good heart."

"He is dead," replied Maggie. "God rest his soul."

"Dead! Sure, he's younger than myself."

"He was in the Naval Reserve and was called up and drowned in the North Sea," said Denis hastily. "But did you hear about the creamery, Kate? They're talking of building one over at Droumavalla."

She wondered a little at his sudden change of subject, but before she could answer his question Maggie began eagerly:

"There was a strange thing happened the night he was drowned. Old Canty, the father, was coming home from Middleton Fair and a great squad of heifers went by him. And says he, 'I took great notice of them for they chewed no cud by the roadside —' "

"Ah, don't be bothering Kate with that," broke in Denis irritably.

"She's not bothering me, and I'd like well to hear what occurred. Go on, Maggie."

"The moon was rising over the sea," continued the old woman, "and Canty saw men down on Incadonney strand. They were putting out the falling nets that do take in the fish. Canty walked on a spelleen and the time he looked again the nets were full of fish and shining like silver. The men were throwing the catch out on the sands and he seed John among them. And says he to himself, forgetting his son was away, 'I will have fish

for dinner. John will bring some home.' Then all of a sudden it came over him that his son was in the big ship fighting the Germans. And a great fear fell on him and he ran and he ran till he came to the sands. But no one was there. . . . Oh, no luck nor grace will follow them that see the Little People and they drawing in the falling nets."

"Tcah, what talk you have!" said Denis curtly. "Canty's an old fool. He seen nothing."

"Oh, he can see," Maggie shook her head. "One time he was up at the cross and he saw the Little People fiddling and piping and dancing and laughing, and there was a boy that was dead and a girl that was dead dancing with them quicker than any."

"And John was drowned the night the nets were out?" queried Kate.

"He was so, may the Lord have mercy on him," the old woman sighed. "Ah, we will soon be in the grave, the rich as well as the poor, and what matter if it be earth or water."

"A young fellow like that!" murmured Kate to herself. It seemed so strange and terrible that a young man of her own age, in the flower of his years, one that she had known, should be whipped out of life with such suddenness, not even the prayers of the church said over him.

"You haven't given me any news of the people about." She eyed Denis questioningly. "What's become of the Roches, the Walshes, the O'Briens and all that crowd? They were nice boys. I suppose they're still in Droumavalla?"

Denis did not answer at once, rising from his chair, taking the alarm clock from the dresser, and busying himself with it. Just as she was about to repeat her question he turned round, yawning and stretching himself. "I'm tired, Kate," said he; "I'll have to be up at the blue of dawn if the hay is to be saved to-morrow. What news there is can wait till the evening."

"To be sure, Denis. I want to give a hand with the hay too."

He looked significantly at his aunt. "Maggie, you'd best be going to bed. Don't be keeping Kate up now. She's worn out with the tire of the journey."

"Oh, I'm going this very minute," the old woman replied, an apologetic note in her voice.

"I'll be real glad of an extra hand with the hay. There's no getting labourers at all these times," he went on, handing his sister a candlestick and turning down the lamp.

She had no choice but to go upstairs to bed; he waited for her going and bade her good-night just outside the door of her little room. The ring of warm affection in his voice at that moment delighted her; it made her feel she counted for something with some one in the world still — counted more perhaps even than Minnie Foley. She sat on the edge of her bed, too excited yet to sleep, reflecting on the wonderful evening that was passed, and picturing to herself the good days that stretched before her. She regretted that her courage had failed her, and she had not inquired about Steve and Michael. A curious feeling of

shyness, quite unusual with her, had kept the words back from her lips. Denis, knowing how they had cared for her, would probably have teased her, given her a life of it. In any case she was a little afraid of the substance of his answer. Both Steve and Michael might have married during those five years of absence. She could not bear to think of them as the property of another woman; and she drove the ugly thought from her. Old Maggie and Denis were poor correspondents, but they would certainly have written it out to her if it had been the case.

It was a little strange that he had not mentioned any of the boys in the village in his account of Droumavalla and of his life. Perhaps it was because they had both been too intent on what had happened to them personally, there had been no room for anything else in their conversation. But she must hear all about the lads she knew to-morrow, and perhaps in the evening some of them would be at the cross, and she would be meeting them.

Kate undressed quickly and was soon asleep, dreaming of that even more wonderful to-morrow.

It dawned fresh and cool, with a menace of rain in the wind, and Maggie, as she made a cup of tea for Denis, remarked pessimistically, "There'll be heavy showers, I'm thinking, and the hay will be spoiled. Ah the weather! when it's breaking it's breaking, and God knows when 'twill cure it."

"Not at all — not at all. It will be a grand day in the heel; the clouds will blow over," he



replied. "I want it to be a grand day for Kate too. D'ye mind that, Maggie. Send her over to me to the hayfield as soon as she has her breakfast ate."

His prophecy was a true one. After a heavy shower a breeze from the west sprang up and had its way driving the clouds before it like a flock of frightened sheep. All day they hurried across the sky to the east, now and again their ranks breaking and the sun's rays darting through them. Then, a soft radiance hung about the hayfield, scents from the grasses floated softly upwards and the faces of the sweating labourers glistened in the light. Kate was keenly sensible of that warm glow and of the harvest scents which she had not savoured for five long years. She breathed deeply as she strolled towards the field by the little stream, walking between thick blackberry hedges, enjoying the drowsy airs, that in that southern country lap its people round, airs unequalled for their clinging softness in any other land.

"Ah, Kate, is that yourself?" Denis called from the top of the growing rick. "Are you come to give us a helping hand?"

"Indeed and I am," she replied; "but I'll just step down to the village first. I want to see Mrs. Corrigan. I'll be back in half an hour for sure."

Denis, his hair and clothes all covered with hayseed, leaped down from the rick and was beside her in a moment.

"Ah, don't go off now to Biddy Corrigan," he

begged. "She'll keep you till the middle of the noon day. Stay with us and give us a helping hand."

"I'll engage she won't keep me a minute. I'll be hopping up here before you've three more loads landed," said Kate lightly. Maggie had been unresponsive that morning, and she wanted very badly to obtain news of Steve and Michael from this cousin of the Turpins. She couldn't bring herself to question Denis about them, only a word with Biddy could satisfy her.

Denis, however, persisted. "Listen, Kate; there's no way of getting labourers at all these times. I've only them two lads and a woman. Look up now at the sky, it'll rain before the day's end. Wouldn't it be a sin and a shame not to save it?"

"Ah, it's not going to rain, and I'll only be a minute."

"Didn't you tell me last night you were aching to have a hay-fork in your hand again? Was that all talk?"

He pressed one into her hand as he spoke and continued with a light laugh, "Come now and show me is there any strength left in your arm at all? Is it afraid of a hay-fork you are, or is it that you're bone idle, Kate Carmody?"

She echoed his laugh with another one and made a dig at him with the fork, then turned to the hay and began to work with a will.

It had been put into big cocks some weeks before when it was cut. The wet weather that had intervened had removed any possibility of

their building a rick. The day before had been without a shower, and Denis was now making the most of his opportunity. Some of the cocks were dry enough to be drawn up as they were by means of an encircling rope; the rain had penetrated others and they had to be tossed out for the sun and wind to dry them. Kate felt a keen pleasure in the steady rhythmic motion of the fork, in the free swing of her muscles, and in the tingle of her skin under the moist sunshine. If there had been any capacity for musical expression in her she would have sung to herself as Delia Conway, who forked beside her, was singing. The music was not there, but now and then she laughed aloud from joy of mere existence. Occasionally, in a short moment of respite, when a fresh load had not yet arrived, her brother would beam down at her from the rick calling out:

“Are you glad to be home, Kate?”

“Troth I am, Dinny,” she would reply; using her pet name for him. Once she added, “’Deed and my heart is singing for gladness.”

It was all so much better even than she expected, and she wondered how she had ever brought herself to emigrate to America. Not even the worst poverty would persuade her to go back now. Whatever came she could not tear herself away from Droumavalla again. She loved the land too dearly. It was bone of her bone, heart of her heart.

She worked away till her shoulders ached, till her hands seemed red hot, till there was a crick in her neck from the sideways motion of the fork.

Then, when the ache became persistent she took a long pull at the can of tea and lay down in the stubble to rest.

Which would it be, Steve or Michael? She had quite decided it was to be one of them now. Both were manly gamey fellows, with an open hand and with the same kindliness of nature as Denis. They were "whole men," as she called them, with no trace of meanness or weakness in their nature. They might be taken for twins, they were so alike. At hurling no one could equal Michael, and not one in the countryside had a lighter foot at a jig or reel than Stephen. Better still, they were fine farmers, with a great store of knowledge of crops and animals. It would be hard to choose between them; and Kate wondered if their father was still living, and which of them would be the owner of Coomacarn.

It was a square house, turned towards the sea, nestling in the southern fold of a hill, a piece of "warm land" stretching down from it. The soil of Rathmore Farm was poor indeed compared to that fertile streak. True, three or four acres of bog took away from its value, but these could be drained. Oh, she would get Michael — or would it be Steve — to improve the farm greatly; and she began to plan and scheme in her mind as to how it might be stocked and as to what crops would be sown. With regard to the buildings a hen-house must be built and the dairy improved — that was, of course, if conditions had not changed there. It was not probable, for old Turpin was very conservative and extremely niggardly in his



ways. She would make the alterations with her own money. The brother who did not get the farm would probably in company with Eugene inherit what cash was going. So her own small fortune would be very useful. Possibly it was just what was needed to make Coomacarn the finest farm of land in the district.

Kate rose from the ground smiling to herself at these happy foolish dreams, her reason mocking at them, and yet in her heart of hearts she was confident that Coomacarn Farm was to be her destiny; she could not avoid it, and in her eyes the destiny seemed passing fair.

The two ricks of hay were completed by the time the stars were out and the wind dropping with the sunset had become a mere whisper in the trees. Denis and his sister strolled back towards the farm through the twilight. She was very tired and happy — looking forward to a rest and another talk that evening. Maggie would be there of course; and she was more anxious than ever to obtain news of Steve and Michael, but she could not bring herself to mention their names when both her brother and aunt were present; they would begin to joke and tease at once, and there would be no getting a satisfying answer out of them. She was too weary to slip out after supper and go down to Mrs. Corrigan. It would be far easier to put the question to Denis while she had him all to herself in the open air. The land had worked its powerful spell upon her, and she must find out now if her life was to be bound up with it.

"I have a great wish to know," she began — "I — tell me what's become of Steve and Michael Turpin?"

Her eyes were fixed on the ground, and she did not see the troubled look that crept across her brother's face.

"They're all right," he replied; and went on in the same breath, "Did I bother you keeping you from going to the village to-day? I imagine it was a bit dull for you piking the hay."

"Indeed then, it was not. Ah, Dinny, it was a grand day. I felt like as if I was queen of the world. Sure I am that every one should go to the States just to get the glad feeling when they come home again."

"And I thinking you'd have high-up notions."

"Tell me, have you any news of Steve and Michael?" she persisted, her attention arrested by the expression of his face. "What do you mean by all right?"

"Oh, nothing — nothing. I'd know how many tons of hay are in them two ricks."

She was looking at him now and his eyes were lowered in their turn. She caught his arm, apprehension in her voice.

"Denis — Denis — you're keeping something back. What is it at all? Tell me quick?"

"I — I can't tell you," he muttered thickly.

Her clutch tightened; she pulled at his arm. "Denis — what d'you mean? I can see by your face it's a bad story. Oh, it's cruel to be keeping it from me."

"Cruel! and I wanting to spare you. Why,

Kate, I wouldn't hurt you for anything in the world. I can't bear to tell it. For I know well you'd a warm spot in your heart for them in the times that are gone, though maybe you didn't know it yourself."

"Tell me — tell me," she prayed.

He looked down at her sadly, speaking very gently.

"D'you mind how friendly Steve and Michael were to one another? There was never a hard word between them. And ever and always they were eager for the other to be first at the match or in the dancing. They were at one in everything. It made no differ when they were after you, the one was ready to fall out if the other was chosen. At the start of the War the two of them were in the Irish Volunteers, and Michael, after reading John Redmond's speech, enlisted, and he and Steve had a bitter quarrel on the head of it."

"And — and —" broke in Kate.

"Steve went with the Sinn Feiners and was killed in the rising in Dublin. Michael was killed in France fighting for the British. God rest their souls."

"Dead! the two of them!"

"Ay so. It's a pitiful story surely . . . the one opposed to the other at the last."

"Holy Mother in Heaven!" With this exclamation Kate, who had been very still, sank on to the ground, pressing her two hands against her face. She did not sob or cry out again, there was not even a quick drawing in of breath to

indicate how she suffered, and the sounds of life in the fields came to Denis with curious distinctness, as she wrestled with her grief in a tearless silence.

A calf lowed in the distance, gulls were calling to each other on the river, and now and then there came a "clack, clack," from belated ducks on their way to the yard, old Maggie shooing them before her. Nearly half an hour went by; still there was no movement, no change in the kneeling figure. The moon was rising and the robe of dusk was slowly drawn away, the silvery light spreading over the field blanching her cheek and lip with a soft pallor.

Denis stood by her, watching her during these slow minutes like some faithful dog, not stirring nor making a sound. Instinct told him that words of his were of no use, that she would pay no more heed to them than to the grass in the field. She was very proud; she must bear her trouble alone.

The clock of the chapel broke across the quiet, chiming out the half-hour. It seemed to rouse her; she rose to her feet, and together they walked up the field in silence. At the stile she turned to him with sudden passion:

"Why did you keep it from me? Oh, Denis, you'd a right to tell me. I can't forgive you for holding it back."

"I wanted you to have two happy days. Maybe I was wrong, but I'd a great wish to see the smile in your eye and no tears on your cheeks."



She did not answer him, and they went on in the same silence. Just outside the house door she faced him again, speaking in a small still voice.

"I am very thankful to you, Dinny, for those two good days."

Before he could reply she had disappeared into the house; he saw the edge of her skirt vanishing up the stairs, and a moment later heard the bedroom door close behind her.

## CHAPTER III

KATE could not sleep. She did not even go to bed; she felt as if she would suffocate in it, and drawing a chair to the window sat down beside it gazing out into the night. She tried to picture Michael and Steve to herself in turn, and the clearer they became to her mind's eye the more difficult it was for her to believe that they were gone. Tall men, with blue eyes and brown curling hair, she saw them swinging their hurley-sticks, saw them leaping hedges and ditches following the harriers on Sunday, saw them twisting and turning, beating out the pattern with their feet in the dance. It was impossible that the end should have come already, that the hurley-sticks should be lying idle, that their swift feet should be at rest for ever. It was a terrible mistake. No God in Heaven could be so cruel as to put an end to so much life and gladness. Kate recognised as fitting that old people when they got tired should slip away easily and quietly: that was like sleep; but this was an agony, monstrous — incredible. She could not face the thought of this free, frank manhood brutally torn from the world and destroyed.

Sometimes she dozed, and twice she awoke with a start, thinking she heard their voices, believing that Steve was standing by her whispering in her ear. The disillusionment was so bitter when

complete wakefulness proved that they were not there — that they could never be there again, she determined she would not allow herself to fall asleep and began walking up and down, now and then pausing by the window to watch for the dawning of the day. It came at last in a soft blue mistiness, beautiful and fair to look upon. A few little clouds, touched with pink, lay curled up just above the hills like the crumpled petals of a flower; the lurking shadows marched away. Soon there was a stir, both in the house and outside it — a twitter of birds, the rustle of cattle browsing in the grass, the sound of people moving below, cocks crowing, the clatter of a milk-pail, all the usual animation that at another time would have been pleasant music in Kate's ears. She hated this first freshness of life now; she wanted to be alone in the dark with her trouble. For it only seemed half real in the night. This bright day brought with it an inevitable recognition of the truth.

She did not grieve as others might have done over the fact that these two brothers were opposed to each other at the last, that Steve had died fighting for Sinn Fein and that Michael had died fighting in the ranks of the British. For her there was only the personal feeling, the hard ache for those dear to her, the regret at the waste of two good men, the sacrifice of young life to satisfy strange inscrutable powers for ideals she could not understand.

Time had seemed of no consequence when she went to America. Why had she let slip those five

precious years that could never now be recalled? How was it she had not recognised happiness then? What a fool she had been to come back, yet she admitted to herself that the return was inevitable. The land, Michael and Steve had drawn her back: she could not have resisted them. But now that all three were taken from her what was to be her future? Ah, what did it matter? What did anything matter since these two were gone?

Kate did not leave the farm that day nor the next; the outside world was of no interest to her. She was living in her memories and suffering for them. On the evening of the second day Denis brought her some old books he had found in a cupboard in the kitchen, and he suggested to her that they might distract her mind. She brightened up at the sight of them; she was fond of books though she had had no time to read in America. The first she took up was an Irish history a schoolmaster of the National School had given her when she was young. Glancing through the pages of the tattered volume she came at length to a description of the siege of Limerick and an account of Sarsfield's men, of their being driven out of their own land and of their gallantry in the service of France. "The Wild Geese," as they were called, had left Ireland in their thousands. An Irish brigade was formed and fought for France in many wars. The battle of Fontenoy had been won by them, though at a bitter cost. Kate read how on that day a third of the brigade had perished — exiles

dying in a foreign land in foreign service. There followed a poem which described how the dead rose from the field and sailed all the night through, finding the land they loved in the dawn. She caught her breath as her eyes travelled from verse to verse, and when she had grasped the meaning a little of the weariness lifted from her soul.

FONTENOY. 1745.

II.—*After the Battle; early dawn, Clare coast.*

"Mary Mother, shield us! Say, what men are ye,  
Sweeping past so swiftly on this morning sea?"

"Without sails or rowlocks merrily we glide  
Home to Corca Bascinn on the brimming tide."

"Jesus save you, gentry! why are ye so white,  
Sitting all so straight and still in this misty light?"

"Nothing ails us, brother; joyous souls are we  
Sailing home together, on the morning sea."

"Cousins, friends, and kinsfolk, children of the land,  
Here we come together, a merry, rousing band;  
Sailing home together from the last great fight,  
Home to Clare from Fontenoy, in the morning light."

"Men of Corca Bascinn, men of Clare's Brigade,  
Harken, stony hills of Clare, hear the charge we made;  
See us come together, singing from the fight,  
Home to Corca Bascinn, in the morning light."

There was an extraordinary exhilaration in those lines. Kate was filled with it for the moment. She thought of Steve and Michael, of their death, and the sense of the waste, the sense of the pitifulness of it left her. They were both brave men; she was proud of them; they had not been afraid to face the battle and to die. She



had not cried at all during those two days, but now something hard in her soul seemed to loosen and to dissolve. Tears flowed down her cheeks, and she bowed her head over the book, praying for the spirits of these two men.

"Kate — Kate. Eugene is below and is wanting to see you." It was Denis calling from outside the door.

"Eugene!" she exclaimed starting up from her chair.

"Eugene Turpin. Will I tell him you can't see him?"

She hesitated and then replied, "What would prevent me? I'll be down in a minute."

She had forgotten that Eugene was left, and for the sake of his two brothers she wanted to see him now. He could tell her more about them, give an account of their lives during her five years of absence, and describe their doings in detail from day to day. Perhaps in time it might be possible to find out if they had gone to the Wars still caring for her. Bitterly she regretted her foolish flight to America. Only when she came back had she discovered how deeply she cared. That was so strange. Oh, why had she not snatched at the present? Why had she held their love only as a trifle? Why had she thought life was so long? Why had she believed they would wait for the moment when it would please her to choose one of them? No answer was forthcoming to these questions, and with an impatient sigh she left the room and descended the stairs.

It was about nine o'clock in the evening, and

dusk had already invaded the kitchen, which at first sight seemed empty. Then, as Kate advanced along the passage leading to it, she perceived the tall spare figure of a man half-turned towards the fire. Its shape, the graceful line of the head, the fine shoulders, the long slender build like a greyhound's caused her to pause in the doorway with a little catch in her breath. For an instant she believed it was Steve, then the head turned; the face was quite different. Eugene's hair was black, and in this respect, and in his delicate features, in the gentle expression of his rather full lips he was unlike his two brothers, but his eyes resembled theirs, only they were brighter — like stars on a clear night they seemed to Kate. There was an appeal in them, a wistful searching look as they met hers, she somehow felt sorry for him though he had not even spoken; it was merely because he looked at her like that that she felt he needed help; he was the kind of man who would always need help, and a queer desire came to her to tell him that she would do what she could for him.

He advanced into the middle of the room, walking with a limp. Then a sudden shyness seized him, and he paused awkwardly.

"Kate, are you after forgetting me? I'm Eugene Turpin," he said, and there was a note of disappointment in his voice.

She did not heed it, for her attention was caught by his evident lameness and by the changes in his appearance. He had grown from a youth into a man while she was away.

He shuffled with his feet, limping one step forward, and then realising that he had addressed her she replied hastily:

"Just for a minute I didn't know a bit of you, Eugene. Now I can see you better. Oh, you've changed a deal."

"D'you think so?" he coloured up and hesitated; "I — I — and you're the same as you ever were. There's not a hair of you that's changed."

"And what way would I be changed?" she asked lightly.

He hesitated again, twisting his broad-brimmed black hat nervously round between his fingers — "I — well — I couldn't say exactly. It's five long years since you left Droumavalla, and a deal can happen in five years. You've a right to be changed. Anyways I — I'm glad you're the same."

Perhaps it was the manner in which it was said more even than the words themselves that made Kate feel a little thrill of pleasure at this last remark; and there was a cordial friendliness in her voice as she asked him to sit down and have a chat with her, and tell her about himself.

"You're a bit lame?" she said as he settled himself rather clumsily into a chair.

"Lame! I've been that way a year and more. I've forgotten what it's like to walk straight."

"Indeed I'm sorry to hear that. It must be very bad surely."

"Ah, it's nothing to speak of," he replied shyly; "it only comes against me ploughing, or after a

hard day's work. Dr. Murphy says it may heal up all right some time or other."

"And how did you get the lameness? Was it a stroke of the ball at hurley?"

"It started with sprains in my two ankles. I was running with the harriers one Sunday, and lepping a ditch overright the Sheep's Walk I landed on a rotten bit of stick, and I looked down and saw my two feet going easht and wesht. The boys had to carry me home that day. The sprains put a weakness on the ankle, and three months after at hurley a stroke from John Walsh's cumaun, fair and square on me right foot, finished it."

Kate began to express her sympathy, but he cut her short seeming not to want to speak of it, questioning her about her life in the States, how she had got on there and whether she liked it, and didn't find Droumavalla a slow kind of place after the big towns. They were both of them a little nervous in their talk, both of them anxious, afraid of the inevitable theme that must come uppermost in their conversation sooner or later.

"Once or twice out there I'd be thinking of you and wondering if you'd emigrated," she said; "and I'd imagine you'd be out West — in Texas maybe. Oh, I never thought to see you at home."

"And why would I go to Texas?" he inquired hastily for conversation's sake, feeling the chill threatening of the shadow that must fall between them.

"In Texas you'd get land for nothing," she replied; "and you were always great at farming. I guess a hundred and fifty acres and not a penny paid down seems the real thing to you. But you'd have to clear the land of trees. The clearing would take a lifetime. Sure the roots have been there since the beginning of the world. Oh, life in Texas would be no joke I can tell you. It's them that aren't wary that takes land there." She paused, her attention caught by the fact that he was in dark clothes, in his best suit only worn on Sundays, holidays, at funerals, and on other festive occasions. By rights he should be wearing his white flannel bawneen, the usual rough work-a-day garments that in bad or good weather must be put on for the fields.

He was conscious that she was eyeing him curiously. It made him uneasy, and he sought for some remark to divert her attention, to bridge the silence.

"There'll be no emigration for me now," he said; "indeed I never wanted to go to America, I'd ever and always a great wish to live my life in Droumavalla and mind the farm."

"No emigration? Oh, I was forgetting." Kate had scarcely voiced the question when they both realised at the same moment that the time had come when they must face the pain of intimate conversation, when words must be spoken about the two that were gone.

"Eugene," she began, "I was very sorry — oh, there's no way I can say it." She made a helpless gesture with her hands.



"It's a hard case surely," he replied. "Oh, there's nothing we can ever say."

"Tell me, how is Mrs. Turpin? What way did she take it? She must have been near out of her mind for those two lovely boys."

"Ah, the half of her isn't there with all she's gone through. At the start it was very bad. To hear her crying was something frightful altogether — and I had no word to say."

"May the Lord look down on her the creature. Oh, 'twas very hard."

"Indeed it was hard. For there were two roads coming to the house and one took one road and one the other."

"Did she feel that? But what did it matter with the two gone from her for ever and always?"

"Faith, it mattered greatly. She couldn't sleep at nights; she'd be tormenting herself about the bitter quarrel between them. And I'd be sitting watching her and I couldn't do nothing. And she'd ask me would they ever come together again. And when I said they would says she, 'No, never again, the hate was that hot in them — never again.'"

"Hate!" Kate exclaimed. "God be good to us, sure they didn't carry their hatred with them to the grave?"

"Ay so — bitter scalding hate."

She caught hold of the table, gripping it as if for support. She couldn't bear to think of such a horror; it was so terrible it must be impossible, and an eager protest broke from her lips — "Don't be saying that, Eugene. They'd

great love for each other. There was never an angry word between them. Oh, I don't believe you. It can't be true."

"It's the truth," he replied.

"And the poor mother, God help her?"

"You may well say that," Eugene continued. "There was no rest nor sleep for her in those first months. Oh, 'twould make the stones cry to see her. She was worn to a shadow. But one night a bright thought came to me mind. I took Steve's volunteer uniform and Michael's khaki, and I put the one upon the other and laid them on her bed, the green and the yellow. 'Tis for luck,' says I, 'maybe it will bring the two of them together.' 'Maybe so,' says she, quite happy like. And after that she slept like a child. She sleeps every night through now, for she never forgets to put the two uniforms, the one upon the other, on her bed."

Kate made a movement which told him more clearly than words that she could bear no more at the moment, and she turned her face from him and gazed broodingly into the fire.

For a quarter of an hour or more there was no sound save the tick, tick of the clock in the kitchen. No measure of time can measure grief, and those moments of struggle in the toils of regret and sorrow were the longest Kate had ever spent in her life. She was saying over and over to herself that perhaps she might have prevented the quarrel if she had stayed at home; that her influence was great with them; that she would have forced them to make it up. She could face

the sorrow of their loss, but she could not face the calamity of their hate, the thought that these two, who had been ever as one, were now hopelessly divided. What would be the consequence in the next world? What would it mean to them now? As the unknown confronted her she gave a little piteous cry, "They'd have listened to me for sure if I'd been home."

The clatter of a chair and Eugene's voice in her ear brought her back to a consciousness of his presence again.

"I'd best be going," he said. "Don't take on too much, Kate. 'Twasn't in your hands. You couldn't have prevented it; no man or woman in this wide earthly world could have prevented what occurred."

"Are you certain sure of that?" she inquired.

"I'd take my oath on it," he replied. "It's God's truth."

As he made another movement to go she laid a detaining hand on his sleeve. "Don't be leaving me, Eugene," she begged. "I don't want to be left to meself. It's like having a bit of them there to see you sitting by the fire forenenst me."

They settled down to talk again, but it was impossible to discuss the small events of life with this big trouble waiting near them, a trouble that must be shared more fully before it could be locked away for ever in the silence of their minds. And after a few words had been said by Eugene about Denis and his marriage Kate changed the subject abruptly.

"How is your father keeping?" she inquired.

"What way did he take it? He doated on them boys."

"It made him hard and sour like. He's as hard as the Rock of Cashel this day. You know he's all for money and land, and we'd a grand farm and nothing to pay for labour as long as Michael and Steve were working there. But it's gone back on us a great deal lately. My ankle comes against me. I'm not as good value as a boy, not worth the food I eat, he says; and he's never done tormenting me for laming myself at the hurley."

"Surely to goodness he'd value the one son that's left him in his age?"

"Ah, not he. And why would he? I'm a sore disappointment to him, I'm a bit soft and a waster. With my ankle like this I can't do a man's work. He's a right to curse me. I've only myself to blame."

"Hasn't he enough and to spare? Oh, they're queer things them grabblers. Sure he can't carry his money to the grave with him." As Kate said this she looked at the fine handsome man before her, looked at his face with its wistful gentle expression and beautiful eyes, looked at his figure, long and lithe, perfectly made; and she marvelled that his father should take no pride in him, should regard him as he would a plough or a harrow, merely as an instrument for gain.

Eugene seemed to feel the sympathy in her voice and in her gaze, for he leant towards her saying: "The old man wants to have the finest farm of land in the country, and he's right. It's

what I'd like myself. And if my ankle was cured and I'd my own way up there it'd be the best kept farm in Munster. Howsomever, himself is old-fashioned and set in his ways. Look at the potatoes itself. For years he wouldn't do any spraying, he said it was against the will of God; it wasn't right. Now he wouldn't be without spraying twice a year for anything. But I was long ages winning him round and we lost two good crops on the head of it. That's what occurs with all the new inventions, he'll keep to the old ways and he won't try any of the new. Ah, Kate, I wouldn't ask for more than a farm of me own and a free hand to work it."

Every fibre of her nature responded to these last words of his, and she stretched out an eager hand in sympathy. "I'm thinking I know what you mean," she said. "Oh, it's fine; it would give such a happy feel. Tell me more of what you'd like to be doing up there?"

He did not answer at once, there was a pause, and then the kitchen clock began to chime; and as the ten strokes beat softly through the room the light died out of his face. He rose from his chair.

"I can't stay a minute longer," was his reply. "We'll have a talk another time, Kate. Tomorrow evening maybe."

"Yerra, what's your hurry! It's only gone ten. Come — sit down. You can stay another half-hour, I guess."

"I couldn't stay one minute longer. I'm late as it is."



"And for why? Sure the night is young yet."

"I'd be afraid," he replied uneasily. "I couldn't stay really."

The agitation in his manner surprised her, and she said coldly, "It's a queer welcome to give me just to come and look at me and then go away again."

He made a step towards the door, halting irresolutely, and finally turning round with an expression of distress on his face. "Believe me, Kate, I'd like dearly to stay," he said. "But I wouldn't dare. It's himself. He thinks I'm cutting turf in the red bog. Wild out he'd be with me if he found me gone."

"And what matter if he did find you gone?"

"He'd be mad."

"Sure let him be mad."

"I'd be afraid. He'd give me all sorts. I'd never hear the end of it."

"Afraid of an old man! What good are you at all, Eugene?" She gave him a contemptuous look.

He winced, but did not reply, holding out his hand to her. She would not take it, and he turned and limped slowly from the kitchen.

A moment later she repented and followed him out to the yard where his pony was tied up to a nail. There she told him she was sorry, and as she bade him good-bye asked him to come and see her again. He promised to do so, and begged her on no account to go out the following evening, but to wait in for him.

She stood for a long time at the gate of the farm, gazing down the road, round the bend of which his cart had disappeared. Her thoughts were following him, and they were disappointed ones, heavy with regret and unshed tears. He was so like Michael and Steve; in a thousand ways he reminded her of the two boys she used to know; like them he had the spirit of a true farmer. Why then was he so weak? Why was he completely under his father's rule? To her knowledge they had never been afraid of anything, fear had no meaning for them. They had been dutiful sons when working for their father, but they had never come to heel like a cringing dog. Eugene had behaved in an unmanly way; he was unworthy of his two brothers; she could not forgive him for the fear she had seen in his eyes that evening. Such high value did she set on courage and independence of character that his strong resemblance to Michael and to Steve seemed to her now to cast a slur upon their memory.

She questioned Denis about him, and learnt that she had not judged too hastily; that she was fully justified in not taking his hand at parting. Not only was he at the beck and call of his father, but he lived in daily dread of him. Denis told her that old John Turpin was continually bullying and abusing his son, keeping him at work the seven days of the week; that Eugene did not know an hour's peace or rest unless he escaped from his master by subterfuge; and that he went about like a haunted man.

At the mere sound of his father's voice he started and turned pale, and in spite of the latter's grumbling and complaining he did a man's work, for he did not go down to the cross-roads like other men, or hang round the chapel after Mass for a gossip, or join in the games. He always seemed to be busy, always at work, making up for his slowness and for the rests he had to give his ankle by spending more time in the fields.

"John Turpin's been hard and bitter," said Denis, "ever since the two sons went from him leaving him short-handed with the farm. And he's never done holding them up as painted saints to Eugene. Oh, it's a strange thing the way people only value the dead. I've noticed it with other families too, they only value those that are gone, the boys and girls that are left they seemly don't care a straw for."

This statement led Denis on to tell of the losses other people had sustained in the neighbourhood. There were very few families death had not visited. Droumavalla was a fishing village, its inhabitants depending upon the sea for their livelihood. Many of the fishermen were naval reservists and had been called up for service at the outbreak of war. Most of these had been drowned or killed, and others who had joined the merchant service had gone down in the Cork ships, that one by one as the months passed had been sunk by submarines; a few more Kate had known had become Sinn Feiners, and had been killed in Dublin in the rising of Easter week; the residue on that grim list were either wounded,

prisoners of war, or had died in France, or at the landing at Suvla Bay. The district had been emptied of its young men in the flower of their age; very few of them would ever return. Nearly all the men of Kate's generation were gone, and she would see their faces no more.

"It isn't like other countries," said Maggie; "the emigration drew a dale of young men to Ameriky before the War. And now the big battles have taken the rest. Oh, the stranger will come to Droumavalla. Many a good name will be gone from it for ever."

"The young lads growing up are Sinn Feiners," broke in Denis; "there are a few of eighteen and nineteen years. They're all that's left now, and what are they but a handful."

Kate buried her face in her hands crying softly to herself. She wondered if God had cursed Droumavalla. In a few years' time when the old people were dead it would be an empty land. She had only to name a few families; the O'Briens of Courlas, the Moriartys of Dundullerick, the Roches of Kilcully had no descendants save three in America. They would not come back; there had been no room for them on the land when, before the War, farming was but a poor trade, and fishing not what it used to be. They had made their own lives in the West; there could be no return. So the district would be deserted, and the old Irish names that had been bound up with the soil for hundreds of years before the Union, that had struggled through the miseries of the famine times, and were taking firm root again

in the twentieth century, would now be swept from it — buried in the grave of the Great War.

Kate's spirit was crushed; before this desolation she had no word to say, all dreams and hopes left her. She seemed to herself like some numbed lifeless creature, no pain could hurt her now: she felt lost in the great loneliness of life — she was no better than a child straying in the dark. It was useless to seek further, it was wiser to let her mind rest. And for the time being sensation had withered up within her; she believed she would not feel joy or sorrow again.



## CHAPTER IV

THE following evening Kate strolled out to meet Eugene. She had decided to leave Droumavalla at once; she wanted to persuade him to leave it also, or at any rate to leave his father's service. When this object was accomplished, when she had succeeded in extracting a promise from him to put his farm life behind him and seek independence she would go to Dublin and look for work there, and she had every reason to believe she would find employment that would suit her.

She had gone to Mass that morning, and on looking about her during the office had realised that she was a stranger in the district. The old people recognised her and greeted her warmly when Mass was over, but there was hardly any one left of her generation, not only the boys, the girls of her own age were gone also — most of them were away in service or working for high wages in England. The countryside was empty, and though she loved it she could not bear the emptiness; there were too many memories associated with it; every turn of the road reminded her of some one she had known. It would be like death to live on here at Droumavalla always looking back. She would go to Dublin where she would make new friends; human beings were essential to her happiness; she believed that in a crowded city

she might eventually forget; and only in forgetfulness would she find peace of mind.

She halted at the edge of Kilcool Wood, and leaning on a bank, gazed down at Droumavalla. The village was situated on the rocky side of a hill just above a creek which ran for some miles into the land. She saw the one hilly street, the little white cottages nestling under the rock, a few blue-jerseyed figures lounging about the quay wall, and beyond, the waters of the little harbour sparkling in the evening light. A trawler was just beating in from the mouth against a brisk breeze and another one was dropping anchor. These two boats were all that were left of a fleet of a dozen or so fishing vessels; the German submarines had accounted for several, and the others were being used for Government purposes along the coast. Yes, the district was very changed; and Kate turned with a weary shrug of her shoulders from this view, of which she was very fond, and gazed inland. She noticed four fine bullocks in a hay-field munching the fresh tender grass voraciously, flicking their tails to and fro, now and then biting at flies on their backs; a little further on she perceived ridges of beautiful potatoes and beside them a field of oats almost ripe for cutting. The sight pleased her, and in spite of folly of such scheming she began to plan out a farm of her own, what crops she would sow, and what stock she would raise.

The sound of a cart grinding along the stony road put an end to her planning, causing her to raise her eyes. She perceived Eugene driving

towards her. Having tied the animal to a gate he joined her explaining that he had had to drive the four miles as it was not possible for him to walk them after the day's work; and he had therefore been delayed because the old man would hang round the yard, and it was only after half an hour's waiting he had been able to get out the cart without his knowledge.

"These are fine fields," said Kate abruptly, trying to hide the displeasure she felt on hearing of this secretiveness.

"D'you think so?" he replied, his face brightening. "I sowed that field of oats. I put down them potatoes, and those are bullocks of my own rearing. But my father sold ground, crops and all, to one Finucane. It's too far from Coomacarn. We couldn't work the two with any ease."

"Well, then, they're a credit to you," she said, looking at him admiringly. "Oh, Eugene, I wish to my heart I could change you a bit. There are some things that are grand in you and others I don't like at all."

He asked her what they were, and she gave him her candid opinion of his character, analysing what she regarded as his weakness, his dread of his father in detail, and finally begging him to shake off the old man's yoke and strike out on his own. Let him emigrate if necessary, at any rate put forth some strong effort to free himself before all the life and spirit in him was sucked away by his father.

"Go off to the States, Eugene," she cried. "You'll get land in Texas as I was telling you."

Cleave yourself out of this altogether and be a man. I know well there are the makings of one in you."

He turned on her with a fierceness she had not thought possible in one so gentle. "I'm not a stone," he exclaimed. "I love Ireland and Droumavalla, and why would I leave it for a foreign land?"

"Then look for work in Ireland. But don't let any one living treat you as if you were a cur dog."

"And what would I do and where would I go if I left Coomacarn?" he retorted. "I'm only good for farming, and what farmer would be fool enough to hire me, a lame man, as a labourer?"

"Well, anyway," she exclaimed hotly, "I'd put my head in the fire rather than serve one that had nothing but curses for me." With this she broke off in her speech. Perhaps she felt she had said too much, for her voice altered, she began to plead with him again. "Listen to me now. If you're dead set on not leaving him stand up to him, don't bow the knee to him, don't let him rule you. Sure your life isn't worth a rotten knot if you're shaking with dread night and day — afraid to take out the car, afraid to go and see a friend, afraid to take an hour's rest at the day's end. You earn more than your keep. Give it into him high and low if he abuses you. Let him see you're a man, let him know you won't stand his talk and his bullying."

"Then he'll leave the farm to my sister Eily who's married in the States," Eugene replied

sullenly, "and she'll let it to a grazier. He's sworn he'll leave it to her more than once already when he was angered."

"Ah, that's his blather. He wouldn't do it. I don't know what's the matter with you, Eugene," she continued reflectively; "I know I wouldn't let myself be trampled on, I wouldn't bear it for an hour."

"Kate —" he hesitated, the shyness he had shown at their first meeting getting the better of him again, and he carefully twisted a blade of oats he had plucked round his hand making a criss-cross pattern of it. No sooner was the pattern completed than he began to loosen the pale strands of straw and went on:

"Maybe I'm a fool, but I — I'm like Steve and Michael and all the rest of the Turpins. They loved the land and 'tis great love I have for it too. Ever since I was the height of three peats I've wanted to be master of a fine farm of land somewhere, and best of all Coomacarn. I know it so well; I know what every inch of ground can yield, what stock I can raise, and if I'd a free hand it's great improvements I'd make. I'd buy machines. I'd save a bit of money and I'd add to the farm year by year a field here, a field there, till the time would come when Coomacarn would be a wonder and a marvel to the whole neighbourhood."

"Oh, it would be grand entirely, the best work in the world," she cried, her eyes as bright as his now.

"I daresay it seems a mean foolish kind of



a notion to you," he replied shyly, "after the big towns in the States and the great places you've seen over there. You're too high-toned for that sort of thing with all the grandeurs of the great cities behind you. Oh, I'll engage there's a strong wish in your mind to be off to them again."

He watched her as he spoke, but she did not heed the anxious questioning expression of his face so eager was she to refute this monstrous libel to tell him that it was the land that called her back. What matter if it was only a half-truth. She would not admit to him that Michael and Steve had had their share in that summons home. The story was a long one; it embraced most of her life in America, her craving when shut up in the hot towns for the fields, her desire through all for farm life and farm work, for harvest days, the hay-fork in her hands, or the sheaves of corn in her arms, the warm moist wind playing across her face and through her hair. The two were so intent upon this theme they scarcely noticed how the time fled by, and darkness was upon them before Kate realised the lateness of the hour. Her anger was gone and he found it easy to extract a promise from her to come each evening to Kilcool Wood and wait there a while for him. He, on his part, promised to try and escape from Coomacarn as often as was possible.

A fortnight went by during which Kate did not leave Rathmore during the day, nor did she attempt to seek the society of the people in the village, but every night regularly she set out for

Kilcool Wood. Eugene missed very few evenings, and on two occasions defied his father when the latter ordered him to stay at home and get on with work upon which they were engaged. Kate had put off her journey to Dublin, and she assured herself it was for this reason. She believed she was gradually curing Eugene of his fear for his father, she was making a man of him.

On those still August nights they would sit upon a bank and look over the bay, watching the two trawlers creeping in, the lights changing in the skies, the shadows falling across the water, one by one, from the opposite hills. On bad days they witnessed the dark-blue clouds, heavy with rain, racing inland from the sea or a mist drifting up from the south cloaking the farther shore with heavy veils. There were long contented silences; but more often they talked with eager gestures and a rapid flow of words; they had much to tell each other when the mood for speech possessed them.

Sometimes, when the evenings were long and bright, they wandered through the wood listening in the twilight of the trees to owls hooting and gulls calling, or in the late evening to the whine of the bats as they flew to and fro. It was here, in Kilcool Wood, Eugene whispered confidences to Kate, and she listened with a grave quietness, feeling immeasurably older than him, pitying him for what she regarded as strange, childish foolishness only to be found in men, and yet that foolishness was just what made them so lovable. They had great plans, great ideas, very often of an

absurd nature, impossible to carry out, but quite beyond the measure of a woman's mind, an instrument that was too practical to grow them, nourish them and bring them to the fine maturity that begets good talk and a flowing speech. At other times Eugene ventured further still; there were moments when he laid bare his heart to her telling her of the loneliness and isolation of his life. The friends of his youth, the boys he had grown up with were gone from Droumavalla; he had not time to seek new friends; nor would they have been easy to find, for he could not join in games or sports. And one soft evening, when he and Kate were leaning against a bank looking over the bay as usual, he told her how sometimes in the winter when the short days and bad weather cut Coomacarn off from the outside world and for weeks together he saw no one save his father, his mother and a labourer he used to think he would go mad. His mother's silence, his father's daily grumbling and abuse were bad enough, but far worse were the memories of Michael and Steve; every corner of the house, the fields, the trees, the haggard, the little river and the bog below reminded him in different ways of the two boys. Where there had been life, joking and talk there was solitude and silence. He did not know how he could face another winter of that kind.

"For all you say I'm thinking 'twould be far better for you to leave Coomacarn," said Kate, "and make your living in another place."

"Indeed it would not be better," he replied;

"but if some one fresh, some one new was to come there 'twould all be different, and I'm certain sure I'd never feel lonely again."

A queer glow of pleasure like the sensation of sun when it creeps out suddenly from behind the clouds after a blank grey day seized upon Kate as she listened to these words. She did not answer them and turned a little away from him looking out to sea. She was very conscious of his presence, of his questioning eyes; they were more piercing than a star now. They wanted to know everything, and how could she tell him what she did not know herself, when all was happy confusion. She, who had believed joy was to be a stranger to her from that time forward, was feeling it acutely in all her being.

Pain and pleasure are the sum of joy, the one purifying the other, and a struggle that troubled Kate, and yet gave her a poignant happiness, was going on in her mind. She knew what he was going to say. Must she let him speak? She would not turn her head but glanced once at his long figure, a little bent as he leant forward, his lips close to her ear. Oh, it would be better not to let him say the words. It was all wrong — graves freshly made were only a little way behind them. At any rate she must put him off, she must gain time to think; she wanted no more than that. There were two roads from which to choose, one a winding and uncertain track, hidden quickly from view, the other straight and level that would be hers to follow for life, one that she might have chosen long ago if that very twisting

and turning, that quality of the unseen, had not caught her fancy, but times had changed; she had travelled great ways; she knew all its mystery now.

Encouraged by her silence Eugene had drawn a little nearer to her, saying, "My father will be at Middleton Fair to-morrow and I want you to come up and see Coomacarn. I've something to say to you, Kate, that maybe would be best said there."

She made a sign of assent with her head, feeling relieved and glad; there would be a little time to think after all.

A few minutes of silence followed, and desiring to break them she slipped from the bank to the ground. Then he spoke again:

"Ah, what good is there in waiting. Indeed, I can't wait. Kate, there are things I've been meaning to say to you this while back, words that are burning and scalding in me, and they crying out for speech."

He paused for a moment, slipping down from the bank, taking hold of her hand, and trying to get her to face him.

She could not speak nor make any movement though she wanted to push away his hand to prevent what was coming, for her cool reasoning faculty was gone from her. She was vaguely aware of this desertion, aware that she would not be able to resist the words. Once they were spoken she knew she would have to tell him that the same road would carry them both to the end.

"Kate, look at me now fair and square, and say out to me —" he began, but got no further, draw-



ing back from her exclaiming: "My God, . . . you to be here!"

A squarely built man of middle height, with wild tufted grey hair, a goat's beard, and a curiously malignant expression on his seamed face, was standing on the bank above them. He was wearing a ragged bawneen, and carried a stick in his hand, with which he threatened Eugene, exclaiming:

"So it's here you are in hide. Begob, you're a nice one, a picked blackguard idling under the hedges with ten men's labour waiting for you on the farm. Oh, I'll have your life for this I will — leaving the weight of the work to me, streeling round the country with girls."

Kate recognised old John Turpin, and as he descended from the bank she stepped forward, for Eugene made no movement and uttered no sound, staring vacantly at his father.

"Excuse me, Mr. Turpin," she said, "Eugene has a right to do what he pleases, and go where he pleases when his day's work is done. Surely at this hour of night it's time for him to take a rest."

"Oh ho, so it's you that have been idling him and wasting his time — drawing him away from the farm these weeks past," returned the old man, approaching her, and blinking up in her face. "Let you mind your own business then, and cut your sticks out of this, you shameless hussy, or it'll be the worse for you."

"Father — do you know who you're speaking to?" Eugene seemed to writhe out the words

rather than utter them. "It's Denis Carmody's sister."

Denis was a strong farmer with whom John Turpin often did business, and it was not to his interest to give offence, so his aggressive manner altered, and he replied to her remark in surly but more civil tones:

"I didn't know ye. But I'd be thankful if you'd leave my son to me. I'll settle him, I will."

Kate would have made some sharp retort if Eugene had not checked her with an agonised motion of his hand.

"I've had enough of you and your idle wasteful ways," his father continued. "You think because I'm old you can play on me, do you? You think you can give me the slip the minute my back is turned, you scoundrel?"

"Father — come home — if you want to curse me come on away out of this. Don't be shaming me here," Eugene begged in a quick, low mutter.

"Now don't rise me by your talk. I don't wish to be provoked," shouted the old man. "Oh, I'll shame you, I will. I'll show Miss Carmody the kind of man you are. Look at him, ma'am, a waster and a pure blackguard. Oh, you wouldn't know the torment he is to me. The turf rick isn't started itself. The oats field isn't cut yet, and it's more than ripe for the scythe. And as for the wheat, God knows when 'twill be reaped. The birds are ating it, and the next fall of rain will scatter the grain on the ground. And he won't lift a finger to it; every day is Sunday to

him; he leaves the work to an old fellow like me, whining about his ankle and his lameness."

"That's a big black lie," burst out Eugene, "and you know it."

Turpin glared at him for a moment in mute astonishment, and then advanced upon him with his stick. "Lie is it! I'll make you eat those words, by God I will," he cried, and struck his son across the face with his hand. For a moment it seemed as if he were going to follow up the blow with another from his stick, but he changed his mind, probably Kate's presence deterred him from using further violence, and lowering his stick he turned to her again.

"Isn't it a hard case surely? My two fine sons to be gone from me and I to be left with an idler and a weakling to work for me in my age. 'Twould put the light in your eyes, Miss Carmody — or would I say Kate, — to see Steve plough up a field, there was no one to touch him at ploughing. And as for Michael no one had a quicker hand at reaping, and indeed he could cut a straight furrow with the best of them. They'd have made fine farmers if God had spared them. But isn't it enough to make any man hard and bitter, he to be counting on two stout firm poles to support his house and to be left with a rotten old bit of timber the like of that. Maybe you don't know the trick Eugene played on me, Miss Carmody. He lamed himself at hurling, by the way to have an excuse for doing no work, by the way to skulk and laze and rest himself when it pleased him."

During all this while Eugene had remained si-

lent now and then wiping blood from his cheek. Kate had made signs to him, but he would not take any notice of them, and just as the old man paused for breath she drew near to him and whispered in his ear: "Can't you speak? For God's sake stand up to him now. Put the lie down his throat."

He lifted his head, and his face was pale and drawn, his brows heavy as his gaze met hers. She turned away, pained beyond measure by its misery and shame.

"Father, you're not telling the truth," he said; "it's not fair to go spreading tales about me. I know I'm not the equal of Michael or Steve; but I do my big best and what more can you expect from any man?"

"Not the truth — spreading tales!" roared John Turpin. "Every bit of it's true and more besides. By God, I'll make you sorry for contradicting me. I'll even you down I will. Listen to me now. If you say one word more in contradiction you'll get no share nor lot in Coomacarn. 'Twill go to Eily; 'twill be in better hands than with one that's only a whimpering cur, a disgrace to my name, a worthless blackguard."

The old man continued to rage and insult his son, who stood before him, his back turned to Kate, quite bereft of speech. She hung about for a few minutes longer hoping against hope that he would break silence, either defend himself or in a few plain words tell his father he would not stand his abuse and ill-treatment and intended to leave him. But her waiting was in vain. There

was no reply when the old man screamed: "You were the one that was lying. 'Twas truth I was saying. Deny it now if you dare."

Eugene hung his head in silence. Further abuse followed. Kate turned away walking quickly down the field. And she sought the darkness of the fir trees of Kilcool as she would a covering to hide her shame.



## CHAPTER V

IN witnessing Eugene's humiliation Kate had felt herself degraded. The sensation was new to her. It was as if she had touched some unclean thing, and had herself been tainted, befouled, by coming in contact with it. There was only one way by which she could remove the soil. She must leave Droumavalla at once. She had never allowed herself to be tyrannised over by any employer however large the bribe; and actually to be so servile as to listen in silence to the misstatements of the tyrant was in her opinion an incredible baseness. And she loved this man who had the soul of a slave, loved, at any rate, that part of him that was Michael and Steve. She had schooled herself into believing he was their perfect reflection, that she had found them in him. The deception was a cruel one. A little mist had passed across the glass, and when it was clear again the image of the two brothers was gone, and in its place was a misshapen furtive creature that horrified her.

Kate's mind, her sense of what was noble and fine, of what was contemptible and unworthy, had always ruled. At this crisis it asserted its complete sovereignty. There had been a struggle, a miserable few hours of questioning, when her love had almost gained the upper hand, when she had weakly assured herself that she could change him

in time, that if she was always with him she could bring him round to her way of thinking. But it was only possible for her to succeed through his weakness, and with the recognition of this fact she realised that she might as well take up a spade and try and cut the rock in two as try to sever from Eugene's nature that which was an integral part of it. He must understand the reasons for her going. However painful it might be, it was necessary for her to see him again. She determined to visit Coomacarn as she had promised. Accordingly, on the morning following the scene she had witnessed between Eugene and his father, in spite of complaints and entreaties from Denis, she packed her things, making all arrangements for her departure the next day, and then when the heat of the afternoon was passed she set out on foot for Coomacarn.

It was a fresh, sweet day with a west wind blowing and bright clouds flitting rapidly across the sky; the trees of Kilcool Wood were rustling and murmuring in the breeze. Though it was late summer everywhere there was a feeling of movement, an exuberance of life — even the thick heather and bracken beyond the wood stirred as the wind breathed over them. And in spite of her trouble of mind a little of the exultation of the day passed into Kate's being as she crested the brow of the hill above Coomacarn and gazed down at the smiling land below her. There was the river tumbling between the rocks, there was the farmhouse in a little hollow, well-tilled fields stretching down the slope away from it, fields

edged by the dark stain of the red bog. In the distance was a wide expanse of open sea, not the sail of a fishing vessel, not the funnel of a steamer upon it, the slatey-green flecked here and there by white, where the breeze whipped the waves into a stir.

Kate, having surveyed the familiar landscape, proceeded to make her way over the hill. She was taking a short-cut through the fields and had several big banks to climb; on the top of one of them she paused, finding herself confronted by a large corn field. The crop was a rich one, but none of it was laid though there had been a severe fall of rain the day before. The heavy ears of wheat were bowing and quivering before that glad breath from the west, and looking at them Kate envied their possessor. What pleasure it would give her to own them, and to help to reap them, to glean through the stubble, and later on to join in the threshing, triumphantly saving the precious grain. After a few minutes' contemplation her ears caught the low swish, swish of the scythe, and quickly making her way along the ditch she came upon the man who wielded it. She watched the wide swing of his arms and body, the rhythmic rising and bending of his broad back, and sighed a little regretfully to herself. Then she advanced into the open calling to him:

"Eugene, Eugene."

"Ah, Kate, is that yourself? I never thought to see you. It's real glad I am you've come," he said, as he advanced towards her. He did not seem ashamed to meet her gaze, and quite unac-

countably her eyes dropped before his. Like a flash the knowledge passed through her mind that she could not resist this man if he chose to ask anything of her while he stood there in his own corn field, beside the waving grain. There was a bit of Michael and of Steve in his face; the cowering Eugene was gone; he looked the master at that moment, with his frank fearless manner, the glow of the fields upon him.

"Come on out of this," she muttered. "I've things to say to you." Then, aware of the ungracefulness of her speech, she added: "That's fine wheat, Eugene. It's a wonder it isn't laid."

"Ah, no wonder at all; the straw is light this year, it's not apt to be laid," he replied, and turned to the boy who was helping him. "Let you finish the binding," he commanded; "then drive in the cows and milk them. I'll be back to this in a while."

She liked to hear him give orders and to see, even if it was only a boy, some one, at any rate, obeying his commands: better still, she liked to feel him walking beside her through his fields; he owned all: these fat cattle, this streak of tilled land, that fine rick of hay, the outhouses, the grey house, and she herself was what was needed to complete that ownership. The fancy was a foolish one; she tried to correct the folly and fought it down though it was all her desire, though she would have given years of life to be able to cherish it and believe in it for one hour.

They strolled towards the house through the fields, and Eugene, apparently deceived by her

manner and believing the scene of the night before had made no difference between them, talked pleasantly and easily of the work and of the farm. He told her the history of its soil, the sowing and reaping of crops, the fortunes of weather and harvest during the two preceding years. He went further, dwelling on its possibilities in the future, telling her what he would do with it once it was in his possession. It wouldn't be like other farms; he would never rest content. Not alone would he be always improving the fields and the cattle, he would have a little garden and plant apple trees and gooseberry bushes in it. The garden was necessary for the bees with which it must be stocked. He had had great talks with the teacher from the Department about that. Then by some means or other, as yet unknown to himself, he had decided to obtain all the up-to-date machines so that he would be no longer a slave to the scythe and the rusty old plough. He also intended to enlarge the dairy and the outhouses. Oh, it would take time, but it would be well worth the doing.

She was very happy listening to him, for she loved to hear him talk about the farm though many of his plans seemed to her more practical mind impossible of realisation. But when he ceased speaking she became painfully conscious of the object of her visit and she could not pick up the thread of his conversation, so they walked forward for a little while in silence.

Beside a boulder, on the edge of the little river,



he paused, and turning to her said gravely: "There's something on your mind. I can see that plainly."

She shook her head; now that the opportunity for speech had come she could not bring herself to take advantage of it.

"Ah, where's the use in hiding it? Can't you say it out to me straight and honest?" he continued.

"Is it the truth you're wanting?" she inquired. "'Twill anger you greatly."

"What matter? 'Tis the truth I want and nothing else."

"I was ashamed of you last night, Eugene," she replied, looking suddenly up at him. "I was ashamed of your cowardly cringing. You gave in to your father, you let him abuse you; when he called you a liar you were silent. I can't let a coward and a weakling be a friend of mine."

"Coward and weakling! You'll take back those words," he cried hotly; "by God you will. I'll let no man or woman living use those words to me."

She would have answered him in terms of equal anger if she had not perceived the anguish he tried in vain to hide. In spite of what he said she believed he had felt the truth of those words; they had burnt into him like fire. And repenting at the sight of his suffering she hastened to speak again:

"I didn't know what I was saying. I was angered. I'll take every one of them back, Eugene. I didn't mean them — not the least in the world."

He drew a little nearer, looking down at her, and the sadness in his voice and in his eyes chilled her as he replied:

"Ah, Kate, I was thinking all the time you were understanding me, but you don't understand one bit. You don't know what it is to have great love for the land. Maybe you're saying to yourself this very minute I'm play-acting — only joking or lying to get round you. But, believe me, I've my heart set on Coomacarn. I want every stone of it, every foot of ground. I want to live and die here, and I'll sweat and slave and be kicked and cursed for it if only I can get it at the end of all."

She lifted her eyes to him again. The passion and the beauty of the man took her by surprise, almost by storm. She felt drawn to him in spite of herself; something within her told her this was the true farmer, and yet she could not permit herself to sympathise. He was doing himself a wrong in paying for it with the price of his independence, with the price of his self-respect and his manhood. It was weakness, not love, that made him give in and allow himself to be mastered. As these thoughts passed through her mind she became conscious that he was waiting for a reply, and to gain time she said vaguely:

"You have no liking for your father, then? It's from no fear nor care for him you let him abuse you."

"I have no love for him, but I care greatly for herself. I'd do anything in the wide world for her. And it's because she doesn't value me

like the old man as so much pounds and pence."

"Well, and aren't you setting him the example valuing yourself at so many acres of land?"

"I am," he replied, "and I'm not ashamed of it. It's the land makes the man."

She determined to appeal to him once more and addressed him in a way that she thought would rouse his pride:

"Denis always says, 'Meet a bully with his own weapons; bully him back.' Face up your father and you'll soon quell him down. Ah, Eugene, I don't like to see you a weak crawling creature; I've a great wish to see you a whole man."

"And lose the farm on the head of it. You say I'm no man. Indeed in the years to come I'd be a poor sort of man, I wouldn't count as one at all if I hadn't this streak of earth behind me. Sure I'd be nobody if I was a labourer. What would be the good of my knowledge of stock and crops and weather? Every farmer thinks he knows best. I'd have to do as I was told. In a town I'd be worse than nobody. I'd feel all astray. The streets put fear in my heart. I couldn't live in them; they'd choke me. But I can tell you, Kate, if I'd Coomacarn at my back I'd feel like a king. Ah, there's little use in talking. You don't know what I'm meaning, what it is to be hungering for land, to have it there all about you, to be working in it month after month, watching it the winter, spring, and summer through and always to have the dread of losing it."

"Eugene, you're wronging me," she cried.  
"What was it but for that I came back home?"

I got tired to death of the streets. I'd a strong wish for the open country and the farm." He was the master again and could dictate to her what pleased him: she was ready to submit. These last words of his had, as it were, set his seal upon her forehead.

He realised that there was a change in her, that she was putting the thought of his weakness behind her, and that at a sign from him she might turn and come to meet him. But she had used very bitter words; she had called him a liar and a coward and he hesitated, afraid to leap at the opportunity that offered itself. It seemed wiser to wait a little longer; the whole evening was before them. So he allowed the precious moment to pass.

They were standing a little below the house, and looking up at it they perceived the tall figure of a woman in a long black cloak, the hood drawn over her head, move along its front. So noiseless were her movements she might have been the figure of a dream.

"Is that Mrs. Turpin?" Kate inquired as she disappeared into the house.

"It is. She's coming back from the chapel, I imagine. She's been saying prayers for the two boys. It's Steve's birthday. That's why she's dressed out in her 'hairy Molly.'"

"I'd like to have a talk with her."

"Come on in, then. She'll be glad to see you. But don't say a word about the two boys."

The house had a neglected uncared-for appearance which Eugene explained as Kate paused on

the threshold and turned to look down at the wide stretch of sea and wild country below them.

"She was in bed for weeks last March. She was queer and strange and wouldn't say a word or eat a bite. Dr. Murphy said 'twas a kind of stroke she got. She's not been able for much on account of it, and things have been a bit upset ever since. Mind you speak loud to her, Kate. She's very deaf."

"Indeed I'm sorry to hear she's been ailing and deaf on the head of it," said Kate, adding impulsively: "Oh, Eugene, it must be very dull and lonesome for you in the house now."

He flushed with pleasure though he made no allusion to her remark about himself in his reply:

"Ah, the deafness is no harm, God help her. 'Tis well for the old to be deaf. They get child-like with too much trouble and 'tis time God shut the sound from them."

Kate, scarcely heeding his words, turned from the house door with a happy sigh; that view of land and water had been often in her mind during her life away. She was very glad to be back with it again and to feel that she had left the big cities with their monstrous buildings for good and all.

Eugene led the way into the house, and they entered a roomy kitchen which was bare but clean. Its principal features were a long oak dresser and a large picture of the Virgin and the Child hanging above the open hearth. Kate took in no details, for her eyes fell directly on the old woman, who was still in her black cloak, the hood still drawn



over her head. She was sitting in a low chair by the window sighing every now and then and rocking herself to and fro. The two uniforms, the green and the khaki, were on her lap, and she was fingering the buttons, feeling the cloth — tenderly patting it down. Before her on a stool were a boy's cap, a mug and a broken sugar bowl. As they watched her she took the cap in her hand and began to mutter to herself:

"Little Steve, my little Steve, I mind the time you'd run to meet me in your weeshy red cap and your little Sunday suit — and Michael never failed to be with you. There was no differ between you, the same clothes, the same bold ways, the same in everything. . . . Oh, the pair of you were very arch. It's many a fine scolding I gave you, my lovely boys." She paused and shook her head, sighing to herself. Then, putting the cap back on the stool, she took up the mug, turning it over in her hands, examining it tenderly and beginning her mutter again: "'Twas Saturday I brought it to you, Mikeen — all the ways from Cork it came. Ah, weren't you the proud boy with a mug of your own. After that you'd never drink from a cup and you'd cry if the little mug wasn't planted there before you on the table. And I mind the long sups you'd draw from it. Oh, you were a wholesome child, God bless you, a'ing never failed you." Her voice trailed away into silence, and then she suddenly gave a chuckle like the crow of a child as she stretched out a thin hand to the broken sugar bowl and clasped it to her breast exclaiming: "Ah, ha, it's great thieves you were,

to be sure. 'Twas the day I went to Middleton Fair you broke this on me. I'd filled it with sugar fresh from Walsh's and my back wasn't turned a minute when the two of ye were up on the table the like of a pair of kittens picking at it. It's the quare start I gave ye, and my poor Steve knocked the bit out of it with his elbow in his haste to escape from under my hand. God forgive me, I was flaming—in the height of rage! And I wouldn't give Steve the bull's-eyes or Michael the peggy's leg I was after bringing home I was that mad. Oh, ye thought me a great bugaboo that time, didn't ye now? "

A feeling of loneliness took possession of Kate at the sight of that sinister black figure and the bony clawlike hand. She wanted to step forward and pull back the hood from the old face, and, above all, she wanted to put an end to the sighing, the hoarse chuckles and the tremulous muttering. It seemed terrible to her that Eugene, who was still young, his future all to make or unmake, should have to witness this brooding over the dead years, should be cut off from his kind, his life withered up by a bullying complaining father and a mother whose heart and mind were in the grave. To converse with them, to seek their company like that would surely do no good to the dead, it might draw them back from their new journeying; at any rate it was a crime in the face of the living.

"She won't look at their photographs," whispered Eugene; "she doesn't seem to care about them or maybe they mean nothing. They're fine young men to her no more — only little children.

It's as if you'd taken a jack-knife and cut off twenty years of her life. She thinks of them now as the height of that table or as babies in her arms."

"Indeed I'm grieved to hear it," returned Kate. "Oh, it's terrible altogether."

"It's better that way — far better than to have her crying and lamenting over their bitter quarrel. She couldn't have borne it long; she'd have got crazed with grief. Now she appears contented like, happy in herself. She'll play with them — talk and laugh and whisper and sigh like that every evening for hours and hours. Many a time I've heard her give them a fine scold, and then pet and coax them or croon an old song that would put them to sleep. It's a kind of a game she plays the while she holds and handles old bits that belonged to them and they children."

"It's a queer way to comfort herself," said Kate slowly; "maybe she does it by the way to put the thought of their quarrel out of her mind."

"That's right," Eugene replied; "that's right. Leastways at the start it was so, but now it's real earnest. I'm thinking she sees the little childher there before her. Howsomever, I'd best rouse her and let her know you're here."

Kate would have liked to check him in his purpose. She was afraid of what she might see if the hood was drawn back, and that which was hidden by it revealed. The dark figure, motionless now, inspired her with a dread that comes sometimes to the simple mind when it cannot understand, when the mystery of existence presses

close upon it, hiding all like mist drifting thickly across the hills.

"Mother, Mother, here's a friend to see you — Kate Carmody — back from the States," shouted Eugene, bending over her, bringing his mouth close up to her ear so that she could not fail to hear him. His words did not rouse her, however, and he had to repeat himself. Then, with a sigh, Mrs. Turpin let her hood drop back, and, rising, slowly turned her face to Kate.

It was a whitey yellow, and so thin and worn it scarcely seemed possible its fine delicacy could contain the breath of life. The features resembled those of her sons, and the gentle expression of her eyes as she lifted them up to Kate reminded the latter of Eugene.

"I'm glad to see you, Kate. You're very welcome," she said in the low voice in which deaf people speak probably because they cannot measure sound.

"It's a good while since I saw you. Tell me, how are you keeping, ma'am?" inquired Kate. She had to repeat herself again and again, and some little time passed before the words seemed to penetrate the old woman's understanding.

"I'm very slow," she said pathetically; "the deafness is a great hardship. Maybe Eugene told you the strange thing that happened me?"

"What was it, ma'am?" shouted Kate. "Tell me what occurred."

"It was very odd; I never knew the like before. I was standing in the middle of the floor

and a great flash went up through my feet and my body and out through the crown of my head. There was a wind roaring and beating ag'in the walls, and I imagined the greatest devil the world has ever knowed was waiting outside for me. Wasn't that a strange thing now?"

"Very strange," replied Kate, and as she spoke the old woman fixed her eyes upon her intently. There was a minute's silence while her eyeballs seemed almost to strain themselves out of their sockets, then suddenly, as the other drew back involuntarily, she screamed out:

"You're the girl Michael and Steve were after. You're the girl . . . God forgive me, I was forgetting . . . there was a quarrel and bitter words and . . . Oh, Eugene, what's come over me? Oh — oh!" She began moaning to herself, now and then pointing a shrivelled finger at Kate and breaking out into fresh cries. With each minute that passed the latter seemed to excite her more and more, and Eugene, cut off from her by her deafness, was unable to comfort her or soothe her. At length, rendered desperate by the childish wailing, he went over to the stool and taking up the uniform and the other treasures proceeded to the door. Instantly his mother followed him, calling to him to leave them down and give them up to her, which he refused to do, and they disappeared round the bend of the passage together.

Kate felt a little dazed and distressed at this sudden turmoil, and she shivered as silence settled upon the kitchen and she found herself alone. Her first impulse was to shake off the impression



of the scene that had just been enacted, to divert her mind into other channels by looking about her and examining the furniture and adornments of the room. Her eyes had not travelled far when they lit upon a photograph of Steve that was hanging in a prominent position on the wall. It had evidently been taken fairly recently, for he was wearing the uniform of the Irish volunteers, and they had been formed some time after Kate had left for America. She lifted it off the wall, placing it on the table and gazing at it for a while. The likeness was a faithful one; this was the Steve she had known; he had not altered in any particular, and looked very handsome in his uniform.

She heard a step in the passage and hung the photograph back in its place, then, searching about for Michael's likeness, perceived an empty nail and a mark on the wall close by where a photograph must have hung; the other walls were bare; it was queer indeed that no place had been found for Michael.

Eugene entered the room, and in answer to an inquiry of hers for Mrs. Turpin, replied: "She's better now. I soothered her down, and she's like a child again playing with them old bits."

"It's a strange way to live, Eugene," said Kate slowly.

"You mustn't mind her," he returned a little anxiously. "'Twas the smother of trouble gave her the stroke and that turned her brain a bit, I'm thinking. But it's only now and again her mind goes back and she tries to make believe she's the young woman of thirty years ago. The sight

of you set her thinking of the bad times again."

"She was speaking of their quarrel. Was it very bad, Eugene?"

"So bad they came to blows one time in this very room. Michael got Steve by the throat, and near throttled the life out of him. Oh, we had work I can tell you to separate them. And Michael was all bloody and Steve as white as a sheet by the time we had them drawn apart. The sight of them nearly drove mother out of her wits; she could never forget that day."

"And the start of it?"

"They had words. Michael said he was fighting for Ireland by fighting for the British in France. 'That's a lie, you're a traitor to Ireland,' says Steve. 'I'm the only one in this house fighting for it, because I'm the only one in the ranks of Sinn Fein in the army of the republic.' That was two months before the rising in Dublin. Oh, they had nothing but hard and bitter curses for one another those ten days of Michael's leave. And indeed we were glad when he went back to his regiment. For as sure as you're standing there the one would have had the other murdered if they'd lived another week together in the house."

"And there was never a bad word between them when I was at home," exclaimed Kate.

"Never a bad word," echoed Eugene. "Once in a while they went for me, but the two of them might have been as one so peaceable were they and they growing up — coming into the age of man."

"O God, forgive them," she cried, trembling;

"God forgive them, what rest can they have and they divided?"

She made an effort to control herself, showing no further sign of emotion, and for a while silence reigned in the kitchen. Eugene eyed her doubtfully as she stood in front of the photograph of Steve, her back turned to him. At length he went over to her, saying: "'Twill do you no good thinking about it, Kate. What can't be cured must be endured as they say. You'd best try and forget it. Come now, sit down and take your ease, and I'll be making a cup of tea for ourselves."

"Eugene," she said, turning round suddenly as if she had not heard him, "where is Michael's photograph?"

"It's here in the drawer," he replied, and going over to the dresser took out a broken frame from under some bits of glass and handed it to her. It contained the photograph of a soldier in khaki, which was bent and twisted, but not defaced. Kate looked at the likeness for a minute or two, finally remarking: "Isn't it a shame to have it the like of this? You've a right to buy a new frame for it, and hang it on the wall beside Steve."

"When Michael posted it to mother," he replied, "she hung it up on that nail — as you're wishing to have it. And she was very happy that day with her two sons looking down on her. Steve was in Cork, and didn't see it till the late evening. But as soon as he laid eyes on it he picked it off the nail and threw it on the floor, and says he, 'No man in that uniform will ever

hang upon a wall of this house. It's disgrace enough that a child of yours should be wearing it.' She begged and prayed him not to be so hard on his own brother, but he wouldn't give in to her. Says he, 'Michael tore up the flag of Sinn Fein the last time he was home. I'll pay him back in his own coin for that.' So the photograph was put away in the drawer."

"That's a good while back," persisted Kate. "By rights it should be hanging on the wall. Isn't the one lad the same as the other now?"

"I thought to put it up there, but father wouldn't have it so."

"And for why?" she inquired.

"Because there are Sinn Feiners about here. And he's afraid he'd be boycotted, his cattle drove off him or the land ploughed up, if he'd the photograph of a British soldier hanging on the wall of his house. The farm is always in his mind."

"Is it more to him than his own son?"

"Well, I suppose it is. But the feeling runs very high through the country, and maybe —"

"It's not right, Eugene, it's not right," cried Kate; "what does it matter if they fought for Sinn Fein or the British? What does it matter which way they died? Sure they were two good men, and they should have equal shares in their home. Aren't they equal before their God now?"

"I know — I know," he replied uneasily. "I did my best. The old man wouldn't give into it at all."

"And which are you for — Michael or Steve?"

she asked, eyeing him curiously. "You never yet told me."

"I couldn't fight because of my leg; but I didn't take any one's part," he returned. "I was always trying to get them to make it up between them. I don't know why that kind of thing makes men of the one blood and the one nation half mad. Maybe it's because I've only understanding for the farm and what's in it."

"Well, then, if you took no sides it's for you to make it equal between them now," she urged. "Will you promise me to put that picture back on the wall, and keep it hanging there? Don't let your father come over you — force him to leave it in its rightful place."

"I can't," he replied shortly; "I see no way to do it."

She drew nearer to him, speaking very earnestly: "They're two sons of the house, whatever their politics may have been — two fine men that never disgraced it in their life by a dirty or a cowardly act. Why would you treat Michael as if you were ashamed of him, now he's no way to defend himself? Mind you, I'd say the same of Steve if you refused to hang his likeness on the wall. You're after telling me they're the one blood, the one nation. Would you keep them divided, and they dead? Would you help to carry their quarrel beyond the grave?"

He hung his head, keeping silence for several minutes, his hands alone showing the stress of the struggle within, as they convulsively opened and closed. When at length he replied his voice was



so hoarse, it was difficult for her to catch what he was saying.

"I daren't, Kate — father would be raging — I daren't. All my work and slaving would go for nothing. He'd turn me off the farm."

"D'you mean to tell me you're afraid to face him?"

"I'm afraid for the farm — afraid I'll lose it, I tell you."

Kate's mind was full of the two brothers' quarrel. Nothing could cure it now, and yet she felt that this act of justice to Michael might help to bring them together, might perhaps bring peace to two fine men who had died hating each other for the sake of the land they loved.

"Eugene, do right by Michael, do right by your own brother," she implored.

"Don't ask me, Kate. It's not in my power."

"It's in your power if you had a small spark of courage or the least bit of pride."

"Father was angered yesterday. Indeed I never saw him so bad — not the time you were there, but after you went home. He struck me, and swore he'd leave the farm to Eily. If I cross him again he'll do that same. The very hour I hang Michael's likeness upon that wall Coomacarn goes from me — Coomacarn that I've laboured and striven for, year in and year out. Oh, Kate, 'twould break my heart."

"You'll not do it then — though it's Michael's share, and it might bring the two of them rest. Sure I am Steve is grieving for it now."

"Ah, not he; there could be no making up that quarrel."

"Still and all, it might make a difference. Say you'll hang it up, Eugene — say you'll hang it there."

"I'd do anything in the world for you, Kate, but I can't do that."

She picked up her coat, and after gazing at the two likenesses turned to him saying quietly, "Then it's time for me to be saying good-bye, Eugene. I'm off to Dublin to-morrow morning, so I'll not be seeing you again."

"You're going to Dublin to-morrow," he exclaimed, starting like a man suddenly waked out of sleep.

"I am; and it'll be many a long day before I'm back in Droumavalla."

"Oh, it's not true — you can't go."

"And what would keep me? Aren't all the boys and girls I knew and cared about dead or gone from the place?"

"I can't let you go. Kate, I've no words to say, what I'm meaning. I want you very bad. I've been trying to tell you the way I cared for you these weeks past. Someways I couldn't face up to it, knowing you thought me a weak kind of fool — I was afraid and —"

"I don't want to hear any more, Eugene," she replied hurriedly. "Good-bye now. Don't be saying one word more."

He sprang between her and the door, and in so doing wrenched his foot, and both pain and

yearning gave such a strange expression to his face, she drew back startled.

"I'll make you listen," he returned doggedly. "I've always cared for you. And from that night I saw you up at Rathmore I've been dead set on getting you to marry me. I was near mad with loneliness when you came, and you changed it all in an hour. Maybe I'm not much of a man, but I've great love for you, Kate, and I'd do anything in the world to please you."

"That's foolish talk," she replied curtly. "You'd put Coomacarn before me any day."

"You're not fair to me. Sure I couldn't do without Coomacarn. Can't you see the way it is? 'Twould be like cutting off a limb of my own to lose it. I'd be nothing but a poor cripple. We couldn't get married without it in view." He began again to tell her how he loved her, and what they could do together. He reminded her that she, too, cared for the land, and in a quick flow of words showed her what the future might be for the two of them, once the farm was in their possession. He promised to give it over to her; she could do with it what she wished; he would carry out any plan she laid down, any fancy that pleased her, if only she would agree to be his wife.

She let him have his say, looking at him with a kind of mute wonder, asking herself as she listened how any individual could change so swiftly. For he was no longer furtive and nervous in his manner, unable to support her gaze, as when he spoke of his father and the farm. The strained air of a man, who is perpetually on the watch, who is

always afraid, had fallen from him like a garment. The old power had come back, the power she had loved in Michael and in Steve, and with it was a certain fire that kindled within her a fierce answering emotion, though she was indignant with him, though she felt with a kind of helpless rage that he, by his cowardice, was keeping the two brothers apart still. They could not be at rest, she was sure; there could be nothing but torment for those two who had so greatly loved; and by one act of grace Eugene might bring them peace. When he had finished, and was looking to her for an answer, she tried to put this idea into words, speaking with the vehemence that takes root in strong desire:

"Eugene, you don't understand the way it is with me. I can't marry a man that's afraid of his father —"

"I'm not afraid of him," broke in the other; "I'm afraid for the land."

"Ah, 'tis the same thing. Howsomever, I'd give into that and I'd live here with you, though 'twould cost me great pain and grief to see you cringing to that old man, and 'twould be very hard to have to do the same to please you. Still and all, I'd do it,— for I've a great wish for you, Eugene — if you'd promise to hang Michael's likeness on that wall, and keep it there."

"And for why? For why? Can't you leave that be?" he cried in an agony.

"I cannot. 'Twould be a great wrong and shame to the dead. As sure as I am living, I know no grace nor peace can come to Michael or to

Steve until the one likeness hangs beside the other on that wall."

"Don't ask me what I can't do," he entreated.

"It's little I ask," she said sadly; "but every bit of me is set on it, and for it I'd put up with your father's rages and tempers, and strive not to say one angry word. Eugene, don't fail me in this."

"Oh, Kate, you want to destroy me. 'Twill mean the loss of Coomacarn. Is there no other way?" He made a movement in her direction, holding out his hands to her. She shook her head and he continued, "I can't go back of what I've said. That's sure. Listen, I never cared for any girl except yourself, the time I was growing up. I'd no hope of you then, with Michael and Steve before me, and I tried to twist my mind some other way, but 'twas no use. My thoughts would be ever and always following you, and you in the States. 'Twas a rare day when Denis told me you'd come back. Faith, it made me the happiest man in Ireland. And then them evenings. Sure the days were like years passing. I'd be thinking the night and yourself would never come."

"Ah whist, Eugene — whist," she cried; "I can't be listening to the like of that. I'm going to Dublin to-morrow, and never again can we meet in this earthly world."

"Ah, you won't desert me — you won't go from me, and I in sore need of you," he begged. "I'll go mad with loneliness. Think of me with the old man raging, and herself so queer and strange.



I couldn't bear the life. 'Twould torment me out of my wits."

She did not attempt to reply to him, and went quickly to the door. He was before her, motioning her back, and saying, while he shook all over with the intensity of his feelings:

"Don't try me too far, Kate. I won't let you go — I can't let you go, till you're promised to me."

She attempted to push past him, but he caught her in his arms and held her close. Frightened and angered by the liberty he had taken, and by the savage look on his face she struggled with all her might. For a couple of minutes they rocked to and fro, overturning a chair, and crashing into the dresser. His lame leg hindered his movements, causing him to stumble, and enabling her to free her arms, though he still clasped her body close. Then, gathering all her strength together, she gave his shoulders a shove with her freed hands; his grip relaxed, and she broke from him.

She did not stay to draw breath, hastening down the passage and out the back door — running swiftly across the yard and up the hillside. His voice sounded in the distance, calling, "Kate — Kate," but she only hurried the more, and it grew fainter and fainter as the distance increased between them. When all sound had ceased, she threw herself down on the grass, panting, trying to compose herself, watching out for the sound of footsteps. None came; and in a little while she rose from the ground, preparing to pursue her journey over the hill.

At first she was angry, and then almost glad at the thought of his treatment of her. During that struggle something of the man, though of a primitive kind, had showed itself; and she wondered if she were quite wrong in regarding him as a soft, weak creature. It was a strange fear that had given her feet wings. She was not afraid that he might keep her there for any indefinite period, she was afraid that her admiration for his masterfulness would lead her to submit and give him her promise. She knew she was quite capable of this weakness; she was never quite herself when she was with him. She could not be sure, as she was at other times, that her judgment would control her words, and fear of the unexpected in herself made her hurry on her way again.

The west wind was still blowing steadily, and the sun was going down, half hidden by a ragged cloud, as Kate halted on the brow of the hill, and looked back at Coomacarn for the last time.

The grey building, flanked by outhouses, and nestling in its green and yellow fields, was pleasant and yet sad in her sight. It was what she had hoped to find on her return; the earth heavy with harvest, beautiful in its fulfilment, the house waiting and ready for her to make a home; but it was empty and desolate, the two reapers gone from it. As she thought of them, her regret for Coomacarn and what it might have brought into her life vanished.

She could never live there with Eugene; she felt so angry with him for his refusal to help his two brothers in what she believed was their dire

need, she did not wish to see him or hear of him again. He had had every chance, and he had failed her. Determining to put him out of her mind, she turned her face in the direction of Droumavalla, and pursued her way across the hill.

The sky was clear, but the moon had not yet risen. The twilight was a little eerie, and Kate felt the loneliness of that high land, with the chill wind beating on her face, and no house or cottage in view. Soon she came to a stony track on which she could walk easily; there were no more banks to climb. Steve and Michael had often passed that way with her, and each bend of the path brought back to her a fresh memory, and with each memory, fresh pain. They were divided, and suffering for the sin of that division, she was sure. The one brother had raised his hand against the other, and no forgiveness had followed; they had gone out of life hating each other. She could not imagine any end more terrible, when they had loved so well. Oh, there could be no rest for them, no happiness. The sin of that hatred would keep them in misery and in pain. The road to Heaven was barred, the way hidden through their blind anger.

Kate's steps quickened; she was trying to escape from the distress occasioned by this belief, and walking rapidly she descended into a narrow valley. On one side of her stretched Kilshanick bog, and on the other a bare stretch of stony mountain land. She had often come here on Sunday afternoon, and seen Michael and Steve and their companions drawing the bog with their hounds. They

seldom failed to start a hare, and she remembered the two men, splashing through the bog pools, encouraging their favourite dogs with calls and cries, and laying bets on which would find the first. She had tried more than once to measure her power over the two boys by setting them against each other, and endeavouring to make them quarrel over their own particular hounds. It was in vain; she had not once succeeded; their friendship was too strong; a woman could not have broken it.

She recalled their strenuous efforts — once the hare was started — to turn it up the mountain away from the bog, so that it should not make a circle, keeping to the soft treacherous bed of mud and water, but would give good sport in open country; she recalled wet wintry days when the dogs passed in full cry with the brothers after them, hallooing, waving sticks and arms, their eyes shining with excitement. And she had caught the infection. Her own heart beating quickly she had followed in their wake calling too.

All the lads were gone now; their hunting days were over; and that waste land was desolate, no birds or life of any kind stirring upon it; the wind murmuring and sighing through the rushes, the pools of earthy water dark and still. In the vague half light stunted bushes growing here and there took upon themselves misshapen forms unreal to the eye. They cast no shadow in that grey severity between night and day, but they stirred and seemed to breathe; there was a suggestion of energy and power within them. They might have

been maleficent beings watching over a deserted land.

Kate halted beside a big stone, and leaning upon it became lost in the weary ways of regret for the fine lads that had left Droumavalla as empty as this waste; boys of her own age sleeping in the cold surf, in the earth of foreign lands, and in Irish graves, for the bitter quarrel between the brothers, for a harm that cannot be undone, for a wrong that can never be righted. Her distress increased swiftly and surely as memory piled on memory. Her lips moved, but she could not bring herself to pray. What was the use? It was a waste of breath and yearning, for God was unmindful of her; God had forgotten the earth when He could allow such things to be. And yet she would have given her own life to have been able to bring those two brothers back for one moment and to have joined their hands. It was forbidden; night after night she had called for them, but no voice answered, no word came.

She closed her eyes and struggled with all her might against the burning rage that filled her at the name of God. How could He leave any human soul in such pain? Long shudders ran through her body; she pressed her cheek against the rock trying to control herself; she beat her hands against the stone, and this mere physical action brought about a change. Gradually the tension relaxed; it was not possible that it should last any length of time; passion spent itself; she became calm again.

Mind and body had grown tired; there followed



a period of numbness. The house was swept, garnished, and empty, but it did not remain so long. Soon in the place of that other visitant came fear. She first grew conscious of it when she wanted to open her eyes, and dared not do so because she was afraid. She felt sure something horrible waited for her out there in the marsh, some tangible power for ill lurked in the pools ready to leap upon her if she stirred. Perhaps it was sent from God to punish her for her blasphemous anger against Him, but it was more likely to be sent from below than from above. And it would watch and wait; there was no escape; it would bide with her all the hours. It would be better to face it at once, and though the dread was heavy on her she opened her eyes, straightening herself, preparing to meet the evil and face the consequences.

A cold silvery light had brought back an unnatural day to the world. There were dark shadows stretching away from the bushes, and pools gleamed white in the moon's radiance. The wind had died down; all was still. No living thing was to be seen anywhere. There was nothing to fear, no power to keep Kate there. Yet languor crept over her, paralysing all her limbs, and she stood very still anxiously waiting.

A pale fair mist hovered at the edge of the bog cloaking the furze brake beyond. From it came a familiar sound. There could be no mistake as to its origin. That was the whimper of dogs worrying through gorse and bracken, hot on the scent of some hidden animal. "A strange hour

to be hunting and signs on it they'll find too," said Kate to herself. And as she said this the whining ceased; quiet settled again over the waste. It was only for a little while. The bell-like note of a hound, as he lifts his nose to the air, sang through the night. He was telling out news of the prey to his brothers, and he repeated it twice again in a clear wild call. In a moment dogs, as big as fox-hounds, were racing over the bog sending up a wild clamour to the skies. Very pale they were, their tongues hanging out; their coats glistening in the moonlight. They twisted in and out among the rocks and pools, sweeping up the slope towards Kate, and she heard their quick panting and they passing her, each one straining to be first in the race. They streamed up the hillside away from her, but she had eyes for them no longer. For a tall dark figure came running and stumbling across the bog. It was Michael, and quite unchanged as well as she could make out in the vague light. His face was lifted up to the hills; he opened his lips widely as if to urge on the hounds, but no sound came from between them. He was drawing near, making straight for her and yet did not seem to see her, so that she wondered for one wild moment if he would fall upon her, trample over the body, and then pass on to the hills.

He swerved a little as he ran and fell against the stone upon which she had been leaning. Then swiftly, without sound or sigh, another figure she had not noticed before passed her. It was Steve, and his eyes were fixed and strange like his broth-

er's. He stooped over his fallen companion and helped him to his feet. For an instant they stood facing her with linked arms, shoulder to shoulder, smiling their old gay smile, and then with a wave of their hands to the hills they turned from her.

The spell was lifted; she moved quickly after them calling: "Michael — Steve — don't be leaving me, and I hungering for the sight of you — Michael — Steve." They did not heed her running now as fast as the wind. She hastened forward, plunging into the bog, crying to them. But no voice answered, no word came.

The moon had covered its light with a cloud. She plunged deeper and deeper into the slimy earth, and as she struggled with the black water and the filth through the darkness she kept sobbing still: "Michael — Steve — don't be leaving me, and I hungering for the sight of you. Michael — Steve."

“ 'Tis rare and late for Kate to be walking the hills. I wonder what's come to her,” murmured Maggie as she put down her knitting and flung a sod of turf on the embers of the fire. There was no response from Denis, who was resting in a half-recumbent attitude, his chin sunk upon his chest, his eyes closed, his mouth a little open. The old woman glanced at him, and then shaking her head got up stiffly from her chair and crossed the room, muttering to herself, “ Ah, sure the man is dead asleep, and why wouldn't he be asleep, and he with the wheat and oats to be gathered and the labour so short. I wish to God Kate would stay and see

him in with the harvest. What frolic is there in the girleen's head at all to be drawing her away up to Dublin? "

Denis stirred at the sound of Maggie's voice and half opening his eyes blinked up at her. As he did so he nearly lurched off his chair, and the old woman caught at his sleeve to save him, exclaiming:

" Rise up now, Denis, and be going your ways to bed."

" And for why? " he inquired sleepily.

" Arrah musha, aren't you swaying and bowing and bending over the kitchen with the slumber that heavy on you. Rise up now, I'm telling you, and go your ways up to the bed."

" I will not then; I'll bide here till Kate comes in," he replied, and standing up and stretching himself he went on, " she's not happy in herself, Maggie. I'd know what's come over the girl at all. I thought she'd make it up with Eugene and settle down; but she hasn't one bit of a wish for him. Now it's away with her to Dublin."

" And you may depend 'twill be away with her to the States in two months or three," broke in Maggie; " faith she's the like of a wild bird flighting over the sea."

" And she telling me she was sick and sorry for herself in the great cities of the world. I don't rightly know what ails; but I'd like well to keep trouble from her."

" There's little you can do, she's that quiet in herself."

Denis scratched his head in a puzzled silence.

Then, taking his cap off a nail he turned to the back door saying, "Well, I'd best throw an eye over the calves. So let you watch out for her and wet the tea the time she comes in and give her her fill of eating."

Maggie was only a few minutes alone and had just stirred the fire into a blaze and put the kettle on to boil when she heard hurried footsteps outside, and there came an urgent tap-tap at the window and a voice calling:

"Let me in — for the love of God — let me in quick!"

The old woman unbarred the shutters and then started back at the sight of a pale face looking fearfully at her from the darkness.

"Glory be to goodness," she cried out, crossing herself; "it's Kate — my — my what ails the child?"

The other pushed up the window and struggled through the opening. Instead of replying she hastily pulled the sash down again and barred up the shutters. Then, with her hand outstretched making the groping motion of the blind, she stumbled to a chair. At first she would not answer the old woman's repeated questions, sitting in a huddled-up attitude shading her eyes with her fingers. At length, however, this curious rigidity was relaxed. She suddenly leant forward, and pressing her face against the old woman's shoulder whispered, "I'm after seeing Michael and Steve, and they hunting Kilshanick bog."

"Michael and Steve!" repeated the old woman; "God between us and harm. . . . But



sure they're lying in the cold ground. 'Tis dreaming you are."

"'Twas no dream," Kate answered, lifting her head; "'Twas as clear as day. First I heard the dogs crying, and then they came leaping over and hither in the bog, and they swept past me, and they the size of fox-hounds, their pelts shining in the light of the moon — and then — my God — I seen Steve and Michael."

"'Tis in the country of the dead you have been," cried the old woman; "Oh, Holy Mother of Christ, bide with us this night."

"Michael was running by me and he looked at me and through me by the way he didn't see a bit of me. He fell crossways on the stone adjacent to myself, and then Steve came running by and he helped Michael to his feet. The one with his arm about the other's neck, they faced round and gave me one glad look, and away with them to the hills."

"Poor girleen — poor girleen," murmured the old woman.

"I've been near out of my head ever since. I don't know how I got home." Kate choked a little, breaking off and turning away. She made no further movement, sitting there staring at the fire while the old woman prayed softly under her breath.

Shadows were trembling and quivering along the floor and up the walls of the kitchen, and the lamp, emptied of oil, was burning feebly when Kate, interrupting the prayer, appealed to her aunt:

"Oh, Maggie, what will I do? Great dread and torment is on me. I'll never sup peace again."

"And why so?"

"You're after hearing the way they wouldn't hang Michael's likeness on the wall of Coomacarn and how Steve threw it down?"

"I am."

"The two of them went out of life hating each other. And certain I am no rest nor peace will be theirs because of the bitter anger that was on them."

Maggie pondered for a minute or two before she replied:

"Listen to me, Kate. The souls of the fine boys that are after dying may be near us and about us, but we can't see them for our eyes are dark. You were sad and lonesome this night. God pitied you, and He it was lifted the darkness from your eyes the way you could see Michael and Steve, and they happy in theirselves. Seemly the hate is gone from them; they are together now."

"D'you think so, Maggie? Oh, if only I could be sure."

"It's as sure as sure. You may depend on it," returned the old woman, and she gently patted the other's hand as she went on; "don't be fretting your heart out for the two boys. Let your mind be easy. Sure God is with them and they have good prayers."

"Maybe so, but 'tis a queer puzzle. I don't rightly understand — I . . . I'm wondering will

the night ever lift, will the good times ever be with us again."

"Ah, sure, there's a share of trouble for all, but there's a share of ease and gladness too. Many of the young have travelled dark ways to death, and heavy sorrow is on us, but in the days to come, if we live long enough, ease and gladness will light on our hearths again." Maggie paused, seeking to express fittingly what lay in her mind. She found what she wanted in a moment: "I'm thinking sadness and laughing are the like of the swallows; they bide with us only a small while."

"Only a small while," repeated Kate, rising from her seat, and she continued in jerky phrases: "I'm going to bed now. Tell Denis what occurred. Good-night, Maggie."

Once in her own room she undressed quickly and slipped into bed. She was too tired to think or to worry any more, and she slept heavily until she was roused by her aunt calling her loudly.

It was still very early; but there was no time to lose if Dublin was to be reached that day. Kate leaped from her bed, and in half an hour's time was prepared for her journey. Then, after a last look round, she descended the stairs to the kitchen. Maggie was bending over the fire as she entered. Hearing a footstep, and perceiving who it was, the old woman rose and went to the back door calling, "Denis — Denis." She returned a minute later, saying: "He's wishful to speak to you. Keep an eye on the fire; I'll be back in a minute."

Kate went over to the window and looked out

at the dark day. The rain was sweeping across the fields, and the clouds were so low the opposite hills were completely hidden by them. She had fifteen miles to drive in an open cart; she would be wet through before she reached the station. Both the wind and the rain were against her going away that day, but her mind was made up, and she was quite surprised when Denis, joining her at the window and pointing at the skies, said to her:

"You'll be soaked to the skin if you start in that storm. Put off going to Dublin till another day. What's your hurry after all?"

She turned her eyes on him doubtfully, replying: "I'd better go. I couldn't stay here any longer — I couldn't really."

"And why not? I'll miss you sore, Kate. Wouldn't you stay just a small bit longer? You'd be a great help to me saving the harvest. And there'll be the thrashing and all. Didn't you tell me the night you came back that you'd set your heart on being home for the thrashing?"

"So I had . . . only — someways things are different."

"How so? Sure there's always a place for you here, Kate."

"I know that well. . . . I'm going away because — because every one's gone. The country is empty, and I can do nothing but think of the lads. The fields, the hills, the village, every bend of the road brings them to my mind. It's pain and torment to me. I can't live here."

"I see," he replied; "poor Kate. It's better for you to go. But come back in a small while."

"I just want to try and forget. The only chance for me is a big town. Oh, Dinny, I may be years away; I may never come back."

"Ah, nonsense."

"It's truth — I'm afraid of the place. I'm afraid of being miserable, because trouble beats me down into the ground, and I can't rise up from it. That's what ails."

"Then I'd best tackle the mare if you're set on going," he replied brusquely, and continued in softened tones: "Listen, Kate. Rathmore will always be your home; and maybe some day you'll come back when times are better. If you do you can be sure of one thing. Whatever hour you come, there'll be a warm welcome for you."

He crossed the room, and had disappeared from view before she could thank him. He was greatly moved and did not wish her to perceive it. Few emotions ever troubled his simple nature. The round of seasons, the weather and the crops made up his life for him. Through the years of their separation he had cherished a faithful devotion for his sister; she was in his eyes a woman without peer, and it wrung his heart to see her go from him in this strange mood. Perhaps he would not have been so anxious and distressed if he could have looked into her mind. The worst part of the struggle was over; and as she stood alone in the kitchen staring out at the looming clouds and the falling rain, she murmured to herself:

"Maggie was right I'm thinking. God is with them, and they have good prayers."



## CHAPTER VI

KATE had been in Dublin years before, but she did not know the city well. Her train brought her into Kingsbridge station about eight o'clock in the evening, and it was scarcely nine o'clock when she left her lodgings and eagerly pursued her way through the narrow streets to the quays. The queer lonely feeling in her heart made her long for a bright street, lights and a crowd. She wanted to rid herself of that awful sense of the great emptiness of the world which had been so strongly hers in Droumavalla; she wanted to brush against human beings, to hear them laugh and talk, and elbow one another as they passed down the street, and, above all, she wanted to see if there were any men left in Dublin, or if it, too, had been swept clear.

There had been insurrection and fighting here while she was in America, and the dread that the city would be as empty as Droumavalla made her run down the winding alleys and along the quays. She paused for breath at the corner of Westmoreland Street, and after brushing back the hair that had wisped over her face, looked across O'Connell's Bridge to the wide houseless space beyond. Though she had been expecting the sight that met her eyes, and it had been frequently described to her, a feeling of awe thrilled through

her, and for a moment it was as if a great hand had gripped her heart and clutched it close.

Here was the scene of the principal fighting between the Sinn Feiners and the soldiers; in that memorable Easter week the whole quarter had been wrecked, and owing to the War rebuilding was delayed. So that this busy and central portion of Dublin still showed the scars, in all their nakedness, of that fierce passionate time. No real effort had yet been made to cover them up and obliterate them. The stranger, armed with a little knowledge, could still trace out for himself the road that death and fire had chosen.

The long ruined street and the ruined quay were quite beautiful on that clear summer night; an elderly moon rode the sky, and under its rays broken bits of wall and heaps of masonry took upon themselves a curious enchantment of soft light and shadow. Kate, having let her eyes rove here and there, and having glanced down at the dark sweep of the river, crossed the bridge. The strange clutching at her heart was gone, and the openness of the prospect, the animated crowds surging up and down excited her and pleased her. "The old dirty houses are down," she murmured, "and oh, 'twould be the pity of the world to build them up again."

There were many changes; it was difficult to take them all in at once. The Abbey Theatre, a hundred yards down the quay, a squat grey building, which had never been seen before from the bridge, was now quite visible, its name standing out clearly in bold white letters against a black

ground. A few rubbish heaps, enclosed by hoardings, were all that remained of the shabby shops and public-houses that had intervened. Strangely enough, all the monuments in O'Connell Street were standing. "Why wouldn't the soldiers and the Sinn Feiners with all their fighting destroy that ugly snout of a Nelson's Pillar, that's neither big nor small, that looks no better than a drain pipe?" Kate asked herself; and for a moment her mind was stirred by an ancient problem. Why, what is useless and ugly remains, and what is comely and useful is so often removed and destroyed! She noted some houses that had not been painted afresh and were still marked by the chipping of bullets; shops she had known, a D.B.C. in which she had once been treated to dinner, were gone, and she regretted very much that when she was last in Dublin she had not written down the names that were painted up on them. They would be historic relics, interesting to possess, interesting to speculate about — names that might never be up on shop fronts again. She did recall one, Duigan near Abbey Street, a young man with waxed moustaches and beautiful white teeth, who had sold her a pair of red braces she had sent to Denis as a present on her way to America, bought out of the five pounds he had given her at parting. She pictured to herself the hundreds of socks, ties, braces, and pairs of trousers that poor young man must have lost in the rising of Easter week, and she grieved for him deeply for a minute or two. Then her attention was diverted into another channel owing to the

fact that her progress was arrested by a crowd of loiterers, who were smoking, spitting and resting after their day's work, or talking to girls at the corner of Abbey Street. She felt comforted by the rank smell of shag, by the voices and laughter, and by the close proximity of so many human beings, and the ache of loneliness left her as she elbowed her way through the jostling crowd.

A little farther down the street she halted and her jaw dropped as she gazed at the remains of the General Post Office. Only the smoke-stained walls were standing; it was just an empty shell. And she had bought a dozen ha'penny stamps there years before. . . . She was vastly surprised at the sight of this cadaverous ruin in spite of the fact, that when in the States, she had received a newspaper from home in which it was described as follows: "Of the valuable and substantial edifice of yesterday only the bare walls remain to-day, stripped naked like an eyeless skeleton, precariously poised over its own ashes." Gradually, her surprise gave way to a feeling of childish delight. It was such a picture, and she regretted that the spaces originally filled by windows were boarded up. It would have been a grand place to scamper about in, and she would have liked to dig among the heaps of rubble, for surely gold belonging to the Post Office must have been buried there during the shelling that had demolished it.

She strolled on farther and noted that the "Crown," "Gresham," and "Granville" hotels were still standing. How small and insignificant they looked compared to the big palaces in New

York, and she turned from them rather contemptuously to find herself near the "Rotunda," facing a pillar and a new statue of Parnell. It annoyed her for a moment to think they should copy that big gawky Nelson's Pillar, and place it on a far smaller scale behind the great man. The annoyance passed as she began to admire the striking face and figure, and read the words near the golden harp above it:

"No man has a right to fix the boundary to the march of a nation. No man has a right to say to his country, thus far shalt thou go and no further.

"We have never attempted to fix the *ne plus ultra* to the progress of Ireland's nationhood and we never shall."

Slowly, as Kate retraced her steps down the ruined street, she tried to puzzle out their meaning and apply it to what lay around her.

The crowds of the world seemed abroad that night. Young boys and girls, old men and women stood about in knots of two and three, or strolled up and down Westmoreland Street, where the newspaper offices are situated, across O'Connell's Bridge, down O'Connell Street, then back again up past the Bank of Ireland and Trinity College, dark and grim. There Dame Street, with its bright tobacco shops and offices, stretched away to the right, or it was possible to go straight up Grafton Street, with its shuttered shops, to the Green beyond.

Kate wandered in and out through the crowd, walking up and down these streets in turn, not



missing out one of them, watching the throng of people with eager interest and looking out for old landmarks. She was very happy in this great company of men and women of all kinds and descriptions, of every human variety, but the crown to her enjoyment, the foam upon the cup of pleasure was not hers until she mingled with the strollers opposite the Bank of Ireland for the third time, making one last inspection of them before she returned to her lodgings.

Three trams, full of people returning from theatres, obliterated the view of Dame Street for a moment; when they had passed with a long creak and groan, Kate perceived a file of men in dark uniforms marching up the road. She watched them with a rising excitement, for as they drew near she was able to make out their uniforms, and she noted that they were a squad of the Dublin Metropolitan Police going off duty. Six feet in height and a corresponding width of shoulder are very necessary qualifications for those who wish to enter this service. As regards physique there is no finer force in the world. Indeed, it is reputed that the members of it are chosen merely for the sake of their stature and great size; they are therefore men of an essentially masculine kind, a kind that was after Kate's heart. Years ago some of her own contemporaries, boys from Droumavalla, had gone up to Dublin and joined the D.M.P. She wondered now if any of them were still in the force or if they, too, had been swept out of the world with the others she had known.

The three dozen young giants filed past the college with a heavy tread. They were a joy to the eye with their shoulders well back, their erect carriage and easy swinging stride. "Grand, long, loose-limbed chaps," Kate muttered to herself as she drew back to the curb to make way for them. Then she caught in her breath with a little gasp of happiness. There was Tom Casey and Joe Spillane, boys she had gone to school with when she was no more than the height of a table, and in whose company she had been often slapped and scolded. She recalled with pride how she had, on more than one occasion, beaten these great big men at the game of hop-skotch played on a bit of pavement that had been laid down on one side of the village street; how they had squabbled and thrown stones at each other, and one day gone "miching" from school with her. And now as they marched by she longed to step forward and wring them by the hand, and talk to them of the old days.

She checked the impulse, merely following them with her eyes until they disappeared round the corner of Brunswick Street. Her brother would give her their address; she would meet them later on when she was in a place again, and with this thought, and the comfortable, happy feeling that the world was no longer empty, she faced back to her lodgings.

They had been recommended to her as "apartments, most genteel and commodious," by Miss O'Shea, the dressmaker in Droumavalla village; they were let by a lady who styled herself Madame

Cooney, and were over a small drab shop in a back street. Miss O'Shea possessed an exuberant imagination, so Kate was not surprised that her bedroom could barely hold herself, her bed, washstand, and trunk; that she bumped her head violently on her first entry into the room; that one pane was out of the window, and that the other panes were so dirty, curtains were not necessary to keep out the light or the inquisitive gaze of passers-by. However, if the bedroom could scarcely be described as "commodious and genteel," Madame Cooney herself was the soul of gentility — a widow in reduced circumstances, compelled by the hard adversity of fate to sell cheap sweets, ha'penny newspapers, and retail gossip in the little shop during the day. There was no doubt — in her own estimation — that she was a soul apart, one who had seen better times, and she had assumed the prefix Madame, partly because it seemed good for business, partly to show her high tone in comparison with other ladies who kept shops in the neighbourhood.

She was a small, thin, meevy woman, with an immense Roman nose and hard high cheekbones, and had a generally tossed appearance, like a soiled article left over after a long sale, at which there has been sweeping reductions. Curling-pins almost always adorned her front hair, and the ends remaining at the back were generally in a trowsled state that no brush apparently ever straightened out. When Kate, on her return from her walk, entered the little parlour behind the shop, she was mending the family's under-

garments in company with her three daughters. These three buds from the parent's stem were replicas of their mother; they had the same mountainous nose, the same pinched skin and retreating chin, their peakiness only a little softened by the roundness of childhood.

At the sight of Kate Madame Cooney ordered them off to bed and put down her work. She had one great pleasure in life, and that was to complain, to relate the tale of her long martyrdom in this hard world. Kate was a new acquaintance and might therefore be willing to listen.

After a few preliminary remarks, she plunged into the tale of her woes, the tale of a drunken husband, who had been a clerk, the tale of her slow descent from gentility and a little house in Rathmines to her present lowly state. "Sure, I never knew a lucky day in my life. My marriage wasn't lucky, my birth wasn't lucky and my death won't be lucky. Oh, there's no hope for me, Miss Carmody."

"There's hope for every one, Mrs. Cooney," replied Kate absently, as she pictured to herself the long sloping stride of certain young policemen in dark tight-fitting uniforms.

"Ah, it's well for a slip of a girl like you to talk. I was a sickly baby, a sickly child and a sickly woman," wailed Madame Cooney; "and my children are sickly after me. Why, a year back I'd the diphtheria in my stomach that bad I thought I'd never get over it. I was ten weeks on my back roaring and screeching with pains in all my bones. I tell you, Miss Carmody, I'd to

rise from my bed a dying woman and I've been minding the children and the shop night and day ever since. Oh, I wish I'd died young, I wish I'd died young."

"You've a right to rouse yourself, Mrs. Cooney, and go walking abroad in the evening. I'm after walking down O'Connell Street, watching the throngs of men and women, and I can tell you I'm as happy as a queen."

"There's a great flush of men over from England — hiding from conscription they say. But what good would it do me to be looking at them. I'd only be thinking of this terrible War and all the fighting and murdering, and what for? Sure, when you think you're going to grasp what's there it's gone." Mrs. Cooney's voice became a whine again, and the corners of her mouth drooped despondently as she continued: "Oh, I could never be cheerful again. I wish I'd died young."

Kate lost patience with this whining; she could not understand the delights of pessimism, the unalloyed joy of a martyred life, and there was an edge of irritation in her voice as she rose from her chair, and shaking herself like a collie dog who has been resting on his paws, answered back with decided sharpness:

"Nonsense, woman, it's a grand world. I wouldn't leave it if you paid me good money down. Isn't it a grand place and a grand city where you have the D.M.P.—great, long, loose-limbed chaps! Oh, you wouldn't find their weight nor their size in the States, I can tell you, nor anywhere else in the wide earthly world."



"It's no kind of a world at all," Madame Cooney piped shrilly, "where you'd pay 29s. 11d. for shoes that two years back were 9s. 11d. And the prices you'd pay for flannel petticoats! Oh, you'd be surprised!"

"But the D.M.P.," broke in Kate.

"Ah, get on with your D.M.P. What good are they? What are they there for, when they can't keep down the prices? Before the War I'd go into town, and get the makings of an apron for 1s. 6d., and now it's 3s. 6d."

"Sure the D.M.P. aren't there to be minding the women's petticoats, aprons, and boots. The future of Ireland depends on them." Kate couldn't explain how it did, but the phrase was one she had got out of a story in *Erin's Own*, and it sounded well, so she repeated it with such decision, Madame Cooney wiped her eyes with the corner of her expensive apron and relapsed into a moist silence.

Kate, perceiving the lachrymous contortion of her features, suddenly felt pity for her and determined to cheer her up with a discourse of a cheerful nature, a discourse on various species of men, on the ones that were dangerous, and the ones that were not, and on the proper attitude to be adopted by the female towards them.

"There's nothing like a man," she began. "That's why I like the D.M.P. I'd go to any place where I'd find a man — a big man full of hair."

"Oh, indeed!" returned Mrs. Cooney crustily; "you know nothing about them if you say that."

I can tell you I don't like one bone in their body, and I never will."

"And I like every bone. I declare I'd die to-morrow if I was shut away from the chaps."

"Are you the queer unnatural kind that's always in love?" asked Madame Cooney hopefully. She had occasionally borrowed from friends penny novelettes belonging to the series entitled "Smart Fiction and Cinema Chat," and wallowed in the passions of young maidens with golden hair and blushing complexions. She had never met their prototypes in real life, but desired very much to do so, and though Kate did not answer to their description, she might, all the same, be of that kind.

"Sure I don't care a bit about men. It's only their company I like," Kate replied with decision; "and I wouldn't live with men with regular habits if you gave me all the gold in Ireland. They can never be pleased."

"Well now, isn't that strange! And I thought you were the sort that was always love-making."

"Not a bit of it, Mrs. Cooney, not a bit of it. I wouldn't look at a man that runs after girls. I've no patience with them. I like the kind that doesn't care if a woman's there or not. It's the talk, the joking with them, that's fine." Kate paused reflectively, and then continued: "I couldn't abide a pack of women; but you could always have a grand evening with a fellow, whether you liked him or no. Oh, there's many an evening down in Droumavalla I made sport with the boys, I can tell you."

"Ah, what good is that?" cried Madame Cooney, disappointed of her romance.

"Good! Why, men have an intellect. Women have no sense or reason. Their talk is all raumeish and gossip. Oh, I've no patience with them."

"Listen now, Miss Carmody, take my word for it, the men are very deceitful; you couldn't trust them. They'd deceive you up to your very face. Oh, some of them twisters have two faces. They show you one face, and they keep the other face to themselves. Look at the way my Joe treated me, drinking his wages on me."

The whining note had crept into Madame Cooney's voice again, and Kate interrupted her hastily: "I think I'll be beating up to bed, ma'am; it's getting late, it's on the blow of twelve."

Madame Cooney followed her to the door, saying darkly: "You think I'm making up stories about myself, but every word I'm after saying is true. Nothing ever went right with me. My poor son Tim died on me; and as for them girls. Sure the makings of a red flannel petticoat is three shillings, not to mind tapes and buttons. Oh, I've gone queer like. I was fond of the children when they came first. I'm cool with them now."

"And why wouldn't you be cool with them — bits of gubbawns, not one beauty among them. Now, if you'd a nice little chap, 'twould be something."

"I've gone solid somehow. Sure if I'd the whole world, I couldn't be happy now."

Kate perceived the corner of the apron rising again, and made a rush for the passage, and to

the sound of snuffling climbed the rickety old stairs. She felt happy and cheerful; and this woman irritated her with her whimperings. What good was she at all? A poor weak creature that couldn't rear one son! No wonder her husband had gone drinking his wages; it was strange he hadn't done worse.

Kate was only a few minutes getting to bed; it was not possible for her to sleep at once. Accustomed as she was to the great silence of the country, her ears kept listening for the noises of the streets; and as she lay there in the darkness of the little stuffy room, her mind, bright and alert in spite of the weariness of her body, went over the day's happenings again and again. She had only left Droumavalla that morning, and yet Droumavalla and its empty desolation seemed so far away. It was gone now for good; there was no need to be looking back; that would be only foolishness. All about her stretched the great city with its sleeping thousands, with policemen dotted here and there in the maze of streets, stamping up and down on their solitary beat, looking after her and every one else, the future of Ireland depending on them. Two of the boys from Droumavalla were among them, and there were probably other lads from County Cork belonging to the force. She would soon be making their acquaintance, and she was no longer lonely, for the old times would come back again.

A feeling of comfortable security, of utter well-being was Kate's, when sleep at last clouded her active brain with its heavy veils.

## CHAPTER VII

A FEW days after her arrival in Dublin Kate had found a place and was being taken over a house in Clontarf and given her orders by her mistress, Miss Lavinia Peacock, who was the eldest of a shrivelled sisterhood, a virgin band consisting of four ancient ladies between the ages of sixty and seventy-five. They were interesting relics of another generation, belonging to a class that has nearly died out in Ireland — their father having been a member of the landed gentry, and at one time the possessor of an estate in West Meath, a fact they made a point of never allowing their suburban visitors to forget or overlook. Reduced circumstances, an “outrageous tenantry” compelled them to live in this rather dismal Dublin suburb. They were, however, in the habit of informing other members of the clan of Peacock that they dwelt there for the sake of the beautiful sea air, which, according to them, was most healthy and invigorating. It was certainly of an odorous nature, as the city rubbish heap was just outside their door, and beyond that stretched a waste of slob land meeting in the dim distance a grey green sea. The rubbish heap and slob land were called the strand by the old ladies, and perhaps it was this beautiful vista of refuse and mud that had inspired them each year on the anniversary of the



death of "dear papa" to insert the following notice in the *Irish Times*:

In loving memory of Julius John Peacock.  
"*We shall meet on that beautiful shore.*"

Inserted by his sorrowing daughters, Lavinia,  
Diamond, Honor, and Juniper.

The lives of the Misses Peacock were not without colour; indeed their interests were so many and varied, it would be impossible to enumerate them. Amongst their enthusiasms, the most vital perhaps might be said to be an enthusiasm for a plentiful table, and rich well-cooked food, and after that the saving of their immortal souls by constant attendance at the parish church, the immoralities of maids, and last, but not least, German atrocities. On the whole, however, the bloodthirsty joy experienced by them in the discussion of a parlour-maid's misdemeanours or a fresh German atrocity did not equal the exquisite pleasure of well-cooked meats. Recognising this fact, Miss Lavinia, who kept house for the family, always paid a good wage to the cook.

Kate had not liked the looks of this old lady, with her hard mouth and wrinkled horny face, when she had been interviewed by her at the registry office, but the wage compensated for what might be only unattractive appearances and a severity of manner that is occasionally to be met with in elderly spinsters of a past age, who are the possessors of a pedigree. Accordingly, Kate removed herself and her belongings from Madame Cooney's bedroom to this suburb.

The kitchen at No. 3 Strand View was like most other kitchens belonging to the middle classes; and she found all the requisites necessary for cooking in it. She was a little taken aback by the wilderness of ornaments, photographs and knick-knacks in the upstairs rooms, which it was her duty to assist Ellen, the parlour-maid, in keeping clean, and also by the size of the Misses Peacock's laundry, which it was her duty to wash and put through the mangle. Still she was not unduly depressed until she learnt that every morsel of food was locked up for fear the maids might steal it; that no male ever entered the house, and that Strand View Terrace was so extraordinarily quiet and respectable policemen were rarely, if ever, known to come near it.

Kate was by nature extremely honest, and her pride was hurt by the daily doling out of food to be cooked, by the insinuation that as soon as Miss Peacock's back was turned she would gobble it up, and the watchfulness exercised by Miss Diamond and Miss Honor to checkmate such greed. "Sure I'd like to throw the eggs and the tea-leaves in their face," she exclaimed on the second morning after her arrival to Ellen; "the old peahens! What right have they to go on as if we were convicts in gaol?"

"Can't you whist?" said Ellen fearfully.

"And why would I whist? Isn't it true?"

"Oh, it's true right enough, but don't be roaring it out like that. Miss Diamond could be spying on us."

"Spying on us! Merciful God, what a pack of women!"

"Have sense now and listen to me," begged the little pale-faced parlour-maid, and her hand was trembling as she leant forward, speaking in a low anxious whisper: "The last cook, Bridie Quirke, was drove out of the house with a week's notice and no character. And what for? Because Miss Lavinia gave her all sorts about the dinner, no matter what way she cooked it; and one day Bridie came down from her flaming, and let a great mouthful of an oath out of her and wished them all in Hell and worse besides. But Miss Diamond was listening at the door and told on her. So she was sent marching without a character. Wasn't that an awful thing for any poor girl?"

"And why would it be awful?"

"Without a character."

"Ay, 'twas bad surely, but there's worse things than that."

"What could be worse?"

"Oh, I don't know," Kate eyed Ellen curiously. "Tell me now, you've been a good while with them?"

"Four years. It's my first place."

"And you never wanted to give notice?"

"Scores of times, but I was afeared. It was this way. I gave notice one time, and Miss Lavinia lepped on me and said she'd give me no character. She was raging and put the heart across me with her talk. Oh, I'd like well to

leave them, but indeed I'd be afeared. What would I do, and I leaving my first place with no character."

Kate did not answer for a moment, staring over her teacup at the small anxious-looking girl with her timid sheep's eyes and subdued air as if all the vitality had been sucked out of her. It was a rather pitiable picture, and the older woman, putting down her cup, said thoughtfully: "You poor creature! They caught you green and young." Then she rose briskly, and there was a defiant note in her voice as she continued: "Well, you may be sure of one thing. Come day, go day, I'll be half-way to Hell cursing them."

Kate did not intend to take violent action with her tongue at once, but she had no intention of putting a bridle on it when in the kitchen, and she had every intention of commenting on the Misses Peacock's ways and doings if the spirit so moved her. In their presence, however, she was calm and self-contained, using few words in any reply she made to them when they addressed her. She was determined to give the place a fair trial, and so held her judgment in suspense for a little while.

The Misses Peacock were threatened with obesity, and their figures were distinctly peculiar. They had sunken, withered chests and wide-spreading hips. The tallest of them and the second eldest, Miss Juniper, Kate soon discovered was the most human. She suffered from rheumatism and a stiff neck, and for this reason had to walk downstairs sideways and never went out, not even to church. Not having acquired any front teeth

after her last set had fallen out, she spoke in gulps, and was therefore at a disadvantage when at table conversation — as it frequently did — took an acrimonious turn and became swift and violent. She always wore a much-trimmed black dress, which looked as if it had been put away in a box for a long time and had got rusty, a black funereal band in her white hair, and a narrow velvet ribbon round her neck. This ribbon betrayed her nature, a nature which her sisters felt had a certain moral looseness and should be kept in check. For she was inclined to be romantic and slightly idiotic, and was accordingly snubbed by them on every possible occasion.

One morning when Kate was sweeping the parlour she called her over to her and showed her the miniature of a young man in old-fashioned dress.

“My lover,” she said with a slow gulp.

“Your lover!” Kate exclaimed, and then looking down at the wrinkled old crone stammered in amazement: “Well, isn’t he a beautiful young man! You — you don’t mean to say he comes courting you!”

“Yes, he courted me,” the other replied with some pride.

“Well, now, isn’t he the lad! He’s after your fortune, I suppose?” Kate had at first been staggered by Miss Juniper’s announcement, but she was too well used to the made-up marriage in the country not to feel, after a moment’s reflection, that in spite of rheumatics, stiff neck, and want of teeth, it was quite possible that this old dame was



being wooed by an attractive and beautiful young man who required a large sum of money in order to set up in business. Considering the age and appearance of the girl in question, the bargain seemed to her a very fair one.

"I was twenty-one when he asked for my hand," continued the old lady, calmly upsetting this satisfactory conclusion, "and I was very much in love. But my dear papa — and I am sure he was quite right — didn't think it a suitable match because his father was in business. So I refused him, and he went away and I never saw him again."

"Imagine now! A fine strapping man like that!"

"It was better so. His family owned a big draper's shop in Dublin. A Peacock of Peacocks-ville couldn't have anything to do with trade. It was not possible for me to forget my name and position. But I kept this. I know it was very wicked. I — somehow — I couldn't help it. He gave it to me." Miss Juniper held up a posy ring on which was written:

United hearts. Death only parts.

Kate, looking down, noticed a slow glistening tear creeping across the old woman's seamed cheek, and she noticed, also, the ugly sunken mouth, the misshapen figure, the scanty white hair which failed to cover certain bald patches, and last, but not least, the coquettish ribbon round

the scraggy neck, and she shivered, realising that this faded old remnant had once been young and pretty and loved.

"Miss Lavinia wouldn't like me to be talking to you. But I see so few people. I — I feel sometimes I must talk to some one."

"It's a beautiful ring and a beautiful young man," replied Kate sympathetically; "and you were lucky indeed to be courted by him. After all, isn't courting the best part with a man? Sure once you're married and the children are squalling there he doesn't bother his head much about you."

"Perhaps so — perhaps so. Anyway Lavinia and dear papa said it was impossible." The tear was furtively wiped away, and in a minute or two Miss Juniper rambled on half to herself and half to her listener: "Times have changed. Things were very different in those days, and perhaps they were better. Dear mama fined us if we went into the kitchen or put our feet on the fender, and we were never allowed to go outside the place alone. But we had very loving parents. Papa was so kind, and though he was very busy — he had no steward and always managed his own estate — he used to play croquet and ride with us whenever we asked him."

These remarks apparently required no reply, and Kate proceeded to dust the numerous photographs and ugly china figures that decorated the room, while the old lady put away her posy ring and secreted the miniature in the bosom of her dress. This action perhaps suggested young men

to her thoughts again, for she began: "Have you ever had any conversation with our milkman?"

"I had a word with him this morning, ma'am," replied Kate.

"Some of the lower classes are quite well educated," Miss Juniper pursued; "and he most certainly has studied a great deal. He is learning Spanish, and has read most of the standard books. He told me that quite different kinds of flowers grow on the opposite banks of the river Suir. Oh, he knows a lot of botany. I talk to him sometimes for half an hour. But of course I forgot, you couldn't talk to him. A man of that class might take liberties with young girls if they talked to him."

"Some men are dangerous, ma'am. But I'm well able to hold me own with them."

"You had better be careful all the same. The best of them may lead a young person of your years astray."

Kate was thirty-three and had seen a great deal of life in the States, and she was about to convey this fact as politely as possible to the old lady when Miss Lavinia burst into the room and glared suspiciously at her sister. "Talking to Kate!" she exclaimed. "Keeping her back from her work! How many times have I absolutely forbidden you to talk to the maids? No, I won't take any excuse."

Juniper was beginning to gulp, which was always a warning that she intended to break into

speech of more than ordinary length. At this last admonition, however, the gulp subsided and she stumped feebly from the room.

"Indeed, Kate, you're very behindhand with your work," continued Lavinia. "This room should have been done out an hour ago. You mustn't make Miss Juniper's silly chatter an excuse for doing no work. There must be no more of this idling, you understand. It's dishonest; it's cheating your employer of the time she pays you for."

"Very well, ma'am," Kate replied quietly, though she raged inwardly. She had been working steadily since six o'clock that morning with a short interval for breakfast, and it was now almost mid-day. She felt very strongly the injustice of these remarks, but determined to bide her time and hold her peace for the present.

Kate found it more and more difficult to keep herself in check in the days that followed. A petty, almost unendurable, persecution began and continued through the day. Punctually at half-past five every morning Diamond was waked by an alarm clock, and she came downstairs, without her false fringe, in one of her father's overcoats metamorphosed into a dressing-gown, to rouse the maids. "Get up, Ellen! Get up, Kate!" she would mutter, then watch them for a moment before resorting to more violent measures. But this summons rarely failed to reach them — and certainly in her drab voluminous garment, with her hard flint-like jaw and fox eyes, she was a

figure sinister enough to summon any sleeper out of the heaviest slumber back into the bad dream of living with a startled groan.

Most human beings vaguely resemble some animal, and quite apart from a pair of cunning pale brown eyes and a long pointed snout, Diamond had many of the attributes of the fox. In the dim light of the early morning it was her habit to pad about the kitchen, nosing in and out among the drawers, snuffling with malignant joy if she came upon questionable articles belonging to the maids, or if she found the rolling-pin not in its proper place, or pots and pans in disorder, or dish-covers without a mirror-like shine.

When her victims were dressed and she saw Kate at the fire, lighting it to heat the bath, Diamond retired to rest and slept peacefully until nine o'clock, then Lavinia would come into her room fully clad, and while the younger sister fixed her false fringe and other artificial accessories she would tell the tale of her discoveries in the kitchen, and they would consult together like two generals as to their plan of campaign against the maids that day.

Every morning, as soon as breakfast was over and the newspaper read by the eldest and youngest of the Misses Peacock, Kate had to face the hardest moment of the day — the ordering of dinner, and comments on the preceding dinner. First the menu was made out by Lavinia, then there was a soliloquy on the necessity for war economy and the using up of the minutest scraps — the Misses Peacock never stinted themselves, and in spite



of an overflowing and aggressive patriotism, suffered frequently from a diet that was both too heavy and too plentiful for ladies of their age — a lecture followed on the cooking of each course, on the robbery and trickery of tradesmen, and the necessity for watchfulness on Kate's part. Finally, Lavinia turned to her sister with a question that never altered in its formula: "Diamond, my dear, what fault was it we found yesterday?"

There always was a fault to find and always Kate was to blame. It did not matter that she had the highest recommendations; and that other mistresses, both American and Irish, had found no flaw in her cooking, and had testified to its being both admirable and hygienic, still the Misses Lavinia and Diamond had their reproaches to make, and almost invariably accused Kate of carelessness and of nefarious designs on their digestion.

"The steak was too underdone last night, I think. It gave me a queer feeling over my heart an hour after partaking of it," said Diamond one morning.

"Yes, it really was very thoughtless of you, Kate. My digestion suffered too. I had the most unpleasant dreams about mice and spiders."

"But you told me you wished it underdone, ma'am."

"What I told you has nothing to do with it," snapped Lavinia; "and I won't have what I say thrown up at me like that. The steak upset us both. And you must understand that in future I can't have my sleep disturbed by your careless

cooking." There was a pause, and as Kate did not reply she continued, "Diamond, my dear, what other faults did we find?"

"I made a note of several. Here are three. There was too much white sauce on the cauliflower, and the eggs were too hard this morning. I am sure they were boiled for four minutes instead of three and three-quarters. Oh, and I distinctly smelt the dinner cooking, in the hall yesterday afternoon."

"Yes, that was most trying when we had visitors. Ah, and there was something else I wanted to ask you. Now I remember. You certainly didn't use all the apples for the tart last night."

"I used every one."

"That's quite impossible. You surely kept some back. Now don't contradict me. I am confident you must have thrown them into the corporation bucket or used them for some purpose of your own. In either case it was very wrong of you." Lavinia launched into a disquisition on waste in war-time, and the necessity for strict honesty on the part of those who had charge of other people's property. Kate was the possessor of an equable temperament and she was slow to rouse, but it is questionable whether she would have remained quiet under these insinuations if there had not been a diversion in the shape of Ellen, who entered the room at that moment and, looking extremely depressed and miserable and complaining of dizziness and aches, asked if she might go to bed.

The Misses Peacock had a bloodthirsty love of

life, and their terror was extreme at the thought of infection. So Ellen was bundled off to bed and martial law was proclaimed, that is to say, no member of the family was allowed to go near the infected area, her bedroom; but it did not occur, either to Lavinia or to Diamond, that it might be advisable for Kate to sleep elsewhere. For the time being the latter was fully occupied, as she had to wait in the dining-room besides doing her own work, and to make matters worse there were two guests for dinner that day. One, a certain Mrs. Beddy, a middle-aged lady with a prim mincing manner of speech, after discussing food in war-time, proceeded, while Kate was handing vegetables, to attack, with some vigour, the servant problem. "Good maids," she announced, "come from certain counties, of that I am convinced. Westmeath has splendid parlour-maids, but I never met a good cook who was born and bred there. All the good cooks come from County Cork or Wexford; and as for kitchen-maids, you couldn't do better than look for them in Kerry."

"Did you hear of the dreadful illness our maid Ellen brought into the house?" inquired Lavinia.

"Yes, Honor told me she had bronchitis."

"It was really too bad," broke in Diamond. "I cross-questioned the girl and found out she had been sitting on the grass on Howth Cliffs for the whole of yesterday afternoon with her young man. Wasn't it shocking? We thought she had gone to her aunt's funeral."

"I think it was nothing short of disgraceful, it was treating us very badly," Lavinia exclaimed.

"Philandering on the cliffs like that, with no thought of her mistress and the trouble she'd give her. Think of the risks we run from infection through such misbehaviour."

"My dear, my dear," bleated Juniper timidly, "you forget we were all young once. We must have sympathy with the young."

Kate nearly dropped the blanc-mange, so surprised was she at this daring; and if Miss Diamond had not glared at her at that moment it is possible she would have warmly applauded the sentiments uttered.

"What nonsense," barked Diamond, as Kate left the room; "Ellen's common sense ought to have told her she shouldn't do it."

"Of course the world is quite topsy-turvy," remarked Mrs. Beddy. "For years, even before the War, maids had far too much liberty, and got into trouble frequently with young men."

"I feel a stand should be made against such licence," said Lavinia; "and so it has been my rule never to allow a maid out for an evening in the week. She may go out after she has laid the Sunday supper in the summer if she is in by eight; but she must be in before dark."

"Our dear papa," chimed in Honor, "always insisted on the maids filing through the room on Sunday when he was taking supper. If they came in after dark he would throw them out on an hour's notice. Oh, those were good days."

The sisters, as was always the case, found the theme of maid-servants extremely stimulating, and

Diamond now broke into rapid speech, a joyful gleam lighting up her small eyes:

"I don't believe there'd have been trouble with Sinn Feiners, nor would there have been any Sinn Fein rebellion if mistresses had united and refused to allow their maids out in the evening. It's in these idle hours they get into mischief. Oh, maids shouldn't be allowed to get uppish in any way; and they certainly should not be permitted to have ideas apart from their work."

"But where's Kate?" grumbled Diamond; "Kate, you're very slow. Do hurry with the cheese."

The latter had been placing certain dirty pudding-plates on a tray just outside the door while the interesting theme of maids and their outings was being unfolded. She had stood there motionless, her breath coming and going quicker than usual, her eyes fixed on a large white bowl as if its shining surface had hypnotised her into complete immobility; but mentally she was all alive; and, as sentence after sentence trickled out to her, her face darkened with anger. She was an independent woman, doing her work honestly and efficiently, and they wanted to turn her into a shadow, like that poor snivelling creature in bed downstairs. A natural craving for freedom of mind, a sturdy singleness of spirit, a recognition of her standing as a workwoman, innate in Kate, had been still more developed by her life in the States; and she realised now, with a feeling of repulsion, that these women wanted to reduce her



to the status of a serf, realised the worth of the dirty insinuation that no girl could talk to a man, however well she had known him, or go out with him without the worst happening. Her soul was full of wrath and bitterness, and it was only with a great effort of will she drove herself to respond to the rasping voice from the dining-room, and controlled herself so successfully during the remainder of dinner, that not even the watchful eye of Diamond detected any change.

Late that night, when the work of the day was over, Kate drew a chair up to the kitchen fire and began to reflect on her own position. She had been afraid to give rein to her thoughts since those bad moments outside the dining-room door, for if she had not gone mechanically about her work she might have smashed china or, in a storm of words, vented her wrath upon the Misses Peacock. She pictured to herself what she would be like after a few years spent in their service, and the image conjured up was not a pleasant one. They had ground Ellen down slowly and surely until the girl was afraid of their slightest word; a glance from Miss Diamond, the mere sound of Miss Lavinia's voice, made her start up with a frightened look of expectation, an order from them made her scurry like a rabbit. She lived in a continual state of anxiety and fear. She had been driven to lie and to tell this story about her aunt's funeral in order to see her young man. There could be nothing but hypocrisy and deception in such a house. It was not surprising that men never came near it,

and that policemen did not frequent the neighbourhood.

There was one remark that rankled more deeply than any other: "It has been my rule never to allow a maid out for an evening in the week." Those were the words Miss Lavinia had used, and Kate remembered that in her interview at the registry office Miss Lavinia's reply had been evasive when she had inquired about evenings out. The old lady had not been straight with her then; this rule was not in the contract, as it were, and it meant slavery. None of Kate's acquaintances were free except in the evening. If she submitted to this dictum she would never see a friend. Tom Casey was on duty all day, and had written to her asking her to fix an evening on which they could meet and have a talk. There could be no meeting or talk now. . . .

It seemed as if the Promised Land had been very near to her; but nevertheless the vision of it was to be denied her. What advantage was there in living in Dublin if she could have no life of her own? All that friendliness and feeling of home, home in the old days when people were plentiful, which she had experienced on the night of her arrival in Dublin, would be of no use whatever to her shut up in a kitchen in Clontarf. Prisoners were better off, for at least they were not lectured or spied on continually. She would go back to the States, she vowed; Ireland was no place for a free woman. But however her mind raged and reasoned her heart would not follow its ruling.

The absence of hurry that gave a proper dignity to the days, the voices of the people, their manner of speech, their method of life, their joking and friendliness, the boys she knew, were all links in the chain that bound her. Perhaps there is no country in the world about which its inhabitants can be so sentimental as Ireland. And that night Kate, for all her experience of America, and in spite of the cosmopolitan spirit she had acquired there, wove her own romance about this country and, like many hundreds of others, for the time being confined herself in the garment of her weaving.

## CHAPTER VIII

"YOU have treated us very badly by giving this sudden notice at a most difficult time, and of course it will make a difference in the character I write you."

Kate had just given a month's notice, and Miss Lavinia, after the first moment's amazement, had, as an asp raises its head to bite, now raised her eyes, fixed them on her cook and distilled into speech the venom of her feelings.

"Treating you badly, ma'am!" was the cool response. "It seems you're not satisfied with my cooking. You were saying I'd put your livers out."

"Most certainly the food hasn't been well cooked, but I — I'd overlook that if — if you'd stay, Kate. But," — menace crept into Lavinia's voice and she scratched viciously with a pen — as if it were a portion of a maid's anatomy — a piece of innocent-looking blotting-paper that lay before her — "but remember this. If you go I can't write you a good character, in fact I can assure you it will be a very indifferent one. For, quite apart from this extremely inconvenient notice you have given me, you have many faults which I might have corrected in time. Indeed, as it is, I consider I have shown far too much patience and

overlooked a great many vexatious habits of yours."

"What habits, ma'am?"

"You don't take corrections in a seemly way. You have a cool impudence of manner which I object to strongly."

"We don't suit," returned Kate; "that's sure. It's much better for me to be going."

"We don't suit!" exclaimed Miss Lavinia; "you mean you don't suit; and it's all due to your want of training. If you'll stay I'll make a particular point of noticing your faults, and I am sure, if you show willingness, you will improve very much, and I may be able to recommend you later."

"I'm afraid, ma'am, we'd never suit each other," Kate persisted. "I'd best be going this day month."

"Then it'll be all the worse for you. You haven't been properly trained, and if you leave us now, in this abrupt way, I shall not be able to give you a good recommendation. It would be deceiving other people — a thing I abhor."

"No recommendation! Sure that doesn't frighten me. I'm not afraid of being out of place. When I was in America they considered my cooking first-rate, and 'tis delicate stomachs the Yanks have, and a fine taste in ating and drinking, I can tell you. Anyways I have my certificate from the Technical School."

Perhaps it was the unkind reflection on her taste in food, the setting up of a superior Yankee standard, or more probably it was the realisation



that she was going to lose this excellent cook in spite of coercive threats that made the lines on the old lady's face tie themselves up into puckered knots, and only slowly untie themselves again as she hissed out:

"How dare you speak to me like this . . . after all my kindness to you, after all the pains I've taken in correcting you? You're a most ungrateful creature. I could get twenty that were better than you: but I wanted to help you, and this is the way you throw the help in my face!"

"This day month, ma'am?" inquired Kate politely.

"Yes, this day month; and don't expect a good character from me, because you won't get it."

"Certainly, ma'am."

A few minutes later, after she had listened to a further dissection of her pernicious nature, Kate swept from the room with a certain stately grace that made Miss Lavinia feel small and undignified, in spite of the fact that she had had the last word. Her temper was of such specific gravity at the moment that Juniper, who had come to ask her if she might sit out in the garden that morning, viewed her only from the door, and then fled from her as fast as she could hobble.

Women of the type of the Misses Peacock, mere empty vessels, who have let their brains lie fallow all their lives, who have never made the slightest attempt to indulge in mental processes of any description, and who have done no useful work, grow more and more like the animal as age creeps on them. Their animality takes the form

of a large and preposterous appetite; they become more and more flesh as the brain-cells are less and less used and, like the beast, they cannot restrain themselves when they see food and will eat all before them, watching each other for their share with glistening, hungry eyes. It is their great interest in life, and the discussion of it, the means by which it is procured and utilised, is more vital and absorbing to them than anything else on earth. Kate was an important agent in this respect, and, as in reality she had been far more satisfactory in her cooking than the long series of cooks that had preceded her, Lavinia felt all the more bitter at the prospect of losing an essential element in the happiness of the household. Bitterness with her took the form of temper; it would not be easy to find such a good cook again, and now that intimidation had failed, that Kate had refused to be caught in the nets spread out for her, she was determined to wreak vengeance upon her victim, and for this purpose, after some savage prodding of the blotting-paper with a J nib, Diamond was summoned.

Theirs was a fruitful theme — the ungratefulness of the lower classes — and, having fully ventilated it, they proceeded in the white heat of their wrath to devise a character that would most certainly retard a cook's progress in finding a new place, and would make all mistresses look askance at her.

Anger begets anger, and Kate's feelings were as hot as theirs as she worked away in the kitchen that morning. She had intended to give her

month's notice and leave them peacefully, without recriminations, and for that reason had been particularly quiet and polite at the opening of her interview with Miss Lavinia. It had been to no purpose, and now her one desire was to annoy her, to wreak vengeance upon her if only for the sake of all those unfortunates who had suffered at her hands.

The trap she had laid in order to secure Kate and keep her bound to her was contemptible; but worse even than that were her suspicions, her bad ideas about decent, respectable men. At all costs she should be taught a lesson — shown at any rate that she, Kate, did not care a snap of her fingers for the old lady's theories and rules about the male sex. It was difficult to say how this was to be done, and two days passed before illumination came, which it did most appropriately one morning, by the post. Tom Casey wrote on an extremely ornate picture post card that he would be passing Strand View on the following evening, and would be glad if Kate, as she could not come into town, would slip out for half an hour and take a walk with him.

Miss Diamond kept the key of the letter-box, and, having carefully studied the card, handed it to her sister with some terse comments. Later, Lavinia — in the midst of a discussion on mutton broth and the methods to be adopted in order to make it thick and nourishing — suggested to Kate that she should at least behave respectably during the three weeks that were yet to run before they parted, and should not be arranging clandestine

meetings with young men. When Kate protested that she had arranged no meetings, Diamond objected that she was giving a bad name to No. 3 Strand View, and bringing the house into disrepute at the post office by the mere reception of these suggestive post cards, and further hinted darkly that the morals of the postman might be seriously impaired in this way. The correspondence must therefore cease.

Kate took this reproof more calmly than was natural, for as the old ladies talked, an idea was suggested by their words, an idea that pleased her vastly. It smoothed away many difficulties. Why had she not thought of it before? Reprisals of a dramatic nature were possible after all.

The following evening she was sitting placidly beside the range trimming a hat of a deep and wonderful yellow shade, which she had christened "the gosling," and in which she admired herself extremely, when there came a ring at the door. Ellen, who had recovered from her unfortunate illness, jumped up, and in her usual half-scurrying, half-scared way proceeded across the kitchen with the intention of answering it. Kate called her back, and when she came vouchsafed no information, but laid down the gosling and began to tidy her work-box.

"What is it you're wanting? Don't be keeping me," piped Ellen uneasily. "Miss Diamond likes the bell answered on the minute."

"What a hurry you're in to be sure," Kate eyed the anæmic girl speculatively; "but I daresay

you wouldn't be in such a hurry if you knew who was on the outside of the door."

"On the outside of the door?" Ellen repeated vaguely; "d'you mean —"

"I mean that 131B is coming to see me to-night. And I know that's him, there's his knock — two beats on the door."

"131B?" Again Ellen repeated Kate's words, and a frightened, furtive look that was seldom absent from her eyes crept into them now. "What's 131B?"

"It's Tom Casey, a friend of mine. That's his number in the force. I'm going to open the door and bring him down here this instant minute."

"Oh, God, Kate! You won't be bringing him down here?"

"And why not? He's a nice young chap — not a bare-faced boy, but a big fellow full of hair. Oh, you'll like him, Ellie." Kate crossed the kitchen quickly making for the stairs. Ellie followed her with arms outstretched in appeal.

"For the love of God, Kate, don't be letting him in. You'll have me destroyed. Miss Diamond will ate me. She'll send me away without a character. Oh, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, what will I do? What will I do?"

Kate disappeared. Ellen collapsed into a chair, lying there for a minute or two gasping. Then at the sound of a heavy step on the stairs she rose, and like a hare scurrying from its form, leaped across the kitchen to the bedroom door, and slamming it behind her, plunged under the bed.



"It's fine to be seeing you again, Tom, and you're looking grand."

"Indeed, Kate, you're looking more than grand. I wouldn't have known you. Oh, there's no doubt in the world but the States is a fine place for smartening up a girl."

"Smartening, indeed! Draw up now to the range and warm yourself while I'm wetting the tea."

131B stretched out his long limbs to the fire with an easy grace, and twisting up his beautiful black moustache, watched Kate with a pleasant smile as she went to and fro, fetching out the loaf, the jam and the tea-leaves from the cupboard. She was apparently not watching him, and yet she took in all his proportions, looking at him from out of the tail of her eye. He had not yet acquired that weightiness of figure for which the D.M.P. is noted, but he was certainly a perfectly made policeman, with his mighty breadth of chest, thin hips, and fine carriage of head. Kate admired particularly his curly black hair and lordly ease of manner. No criminal, however evil, could upset the equanimity of such a man. He looked like a "king of the world" she thought to herself, and oh it was good to have a man's company again, even for an hour or two, after this tedious sojourn in a house of females.

Certainly fortune had been kind to station him in Dublin, he would look very well walking out with any woman. In the old days he had been full of sense, and could express himself well on

politics, agriculture, dancing, hurley-ball, and all the topics of the newspaper. Kate, like many of her race, loved good talk, and would often pause in conversation, searching about in her mind for an appropriate image or picture. She liked suggestive ideas, and objected to the idle chatter of girls. That was one of the reasons why the sight of Tom Casey rejoiced her heart. He would possibly bring her into touch with other members of the D.M.P., and in time she might have quite a circle of male acquaintances in Dublin, and could enjoy to the full the pleasant pastime of sensible conversation.

Now that she had coloured his tea and sweetened it for him, she sat down, and together they discussed the girls they had grown up with, what had become of them, what would become of them, and what might have become of them. Relatives were an interesting topic, and Tom gave an enlivening account of the marriage of a great-aunt of his. "She was sixty years living, and as soon as she'd buried her first husband she took up with Henessy, a young dark lad, just budding a moustache. Oh, that wedding was after rising great gas I can tell you."

"It used to be easier to get a chap in the country than in Dublin," commented Kate.

"Ay, indeed, girls is scarce in the country."

"Isn't it strange to go back and see little boys that used to be going to school great big chaps looking for girls?"

"It is so. But sure they look for girls very

young in County Cork. They start at sixteen — going to all the gatherings and dances, and they'll take any old thing."

"D'you mind Mrs. Goggin?" inquired Kate.

"I do not," was the reply.

"She was a queer little woman with a hundred pounds and a fine farm of land over against Rupera mountain. Like an old witch she was. Oh, you'd be afraid of her if you saw her, you'd think she hadn't combed her hair for six years nor washed her face. You couldn't stomach her. Well, one Dwyer, a grand young lad, was after coming back from the Boer War and his father wanted him married and spoke to the old woman. Would you believe it, she refused him and married an old fellow with money, that wore a swallow-tail coat and drank. You'd die if you saw the two of them."

Having suitably disposed of Mrs. Goggin Kate and 131B proceeded to discuss the situation of the world in general with much enthusiasm, the latter explaining in a few lordly phrases its complicated condition, the causes that had led up to the War, the attitudes of each country in Europe towards Germany, the food problem, the methods whereby an allotment could be made profitable, the state of Ireland, the U-boat warfare, and the position of America. There was nothing in the general state of affairs 131B could not make plain; no riddle that had not its answer. Kate now and then made some shrewd comments, but on the whole she was much impressed by his learning — a learning culled by Tom, after much diligent

study, from the columns of the *Herald* and translated into his own vernacular, to which were added some long words quite incomprehensible to himself, but repeatedly used by the newspaper man.

They made Kate stare at him with some astonishment, for he had not been so remarkably bright at his books at the National School. After a little while he became aware of the stare, and paused in the middle of a long speech about the merits of onions and potatoes grown in the soil of Dublin city to inquire why she looked at him in that "queer unnatural way."

"God knows, I've a right to be looking at you with all the grammar lepping out of you."

"Grammar!" 131B gave his moustache a satisfied twist. "They do say up at the barracks I've an intellect."

"Oh ay, you'd always sense, but you've book-learning now, and it's strange, considering the way you were slapped and scolded by Mrs. Duggan at the school when you were a little lad."

"Ah, begob, I was lazy in them days; but there's plenty here if I'm minded to use it." Tom tapped his forehead significantly, and pursed up his lips with such an air of wisdom Kate was quite overawed and felt that it would be well to obtain his learned opinion on the late happenings in her life.

"Would you give me an advice, Tom?" she inquired respectfully.

"An advice? To be sure I will."

"It's about Miss Peacock."

"She's an elderly female, I believe?" 131B

plucked again with a flourish at the hair on his upper lip.

"She is that."

"And a queer sketch into the bargain?"

"The queerest that ever was. She's a puss on her would paralyse a snipe."

"I see." 131B gave an oracular twist to his brows. "Now I know where I am. Tell me what she is after doing to you."

The tale was of considerable length — a whole pipeful of shag was consumed and the bowl of the pipe scraped out before it was finished. When Kate finally ceased speaking there was a long pause, during which the bowl was refilled and the tobacco patted tidily down by an enormous thumb. It seemed as if that pause would never come to an end, never would sentence be pronounced.

"Freedom, there's nothing like freedom," murmured 131B at length with a happy sigh, emitting a long twining coil of smoke. "We will bow the knee to no oppressor, as the *Evening Mail* says; and says I, To Hell with all the Miss Peacocks that were ever born and ever will be."

The words were uttered so impressively and with such an air of weighty consideration Kate's eyes moistened with admiration as she gazed at the great man. He was certainly magnificent. There was nothing he could not face. The Misses Peacock would be like dirt under his feet. What a pity there was no possibility of their meeting. How fine it would be to see them quiver and blench before him, how fine to make them feel his iron heel.



"You're too soft with them, Kate," continued Tom after another impressive pause. "You'd a right to tear them for speaking to you that way. No character, indeed! Oh, I'd have sent them scooting if they'd refused me a character. I wouldn't stand their chat, I can tell you. I'd give them the rough side of my tongue; I'd make them feel me."

"Ah, sure it wasn't worth my while to be rising a row," responded Kate with apparent carelessness, while inwardly she glowed with pleasure. That was the right kind of talk surely. Here was a whole man, not half a one like Eugene, a man who was afraid of no one, and who would tell all the tyrants in the world what he thought of them right up to their very face and then go his own independent way. "We will bow the knee to no oppressor." What wisdom and what strength lay behind this momentous statement!

131B was now properly wound up. Silent for hours together on his beat he was quite ready and even anxious in company to bear the burden of conversation, especially when it turned on some elevating theme like freedom or the butchery of the oppressed. And so his tongue went tic-tac, tic-tac as he reviewed in turn, with many kindly oaths, all the tyrants since Cromwell.

It was getting late; but neither of the two were aware of the time, and Kate was enjoying to the full the satisfying vision of a whole man when there came the sound of a pad-pad on the stone stairs and the creak of the kitchen door. Tom gave an uneasy start, and he had good reason for it.

In the doorway stood a sinister figure that might have come from beyond the world, with its wrinkled old face, its half-bald head and wicked little eyes that peered and blinked at the couple by the fire. It was Diamond, clad in her father's overcoat, bed socks, and the family's bedroom slippers. Absence of speech made her seem more impressive, as she softly advanced to the kitchen table. Kate did not stir, eyeing her with a certain calm pleasure. Tom would have his opportunity after all; it was worth living merely to see these two face to face.

The silence brought to him, however, no pleasant thoughts. It was, on the face of it, unendurable, and he shook out of himself, "I'd best be going," with a husky choke as if a dry crumb of war bread had lodged in his vocal cords.

"'Tis herself," whispered Kate; "you'd best stand up to her now as you was saying."

131B was in mufti, and perhaps he felt the loss of his uniform. Anyway, instead of accepting Kate's invitation he retreated with more haste than skill, dinting his back against a dish-cover that was on the wall, and finally sending it clattering to the ground. He stood huddled in the corner, abject and miserable, all the erectness gone from his figure, and even the curl vanishing from his moustache. It was quite evident that no dramatic pronouncement on freedom was to be expected from him.

"What are you doing here?" inquired Diamond, fixing her gaze upon this dejected figure.

"I don't know," replied 131B, rubbing his back thoughtfully.

"Then please leave my property alone." The old lady pointed a condemnatory finger at the dish-cover and continued, "How dare you, a common man, come into my kitchen in the dead of night — a vagabond from off the street! Answer me. What are you doing here?"

"I beg your pardon, ma'am. Excuse me, ma'am. It was a mistake — a wrong number. I got lost someways."

"You're not telling the truth. You're an — an accomplice of hers." Diamond wheeled suddenly round upon Kate, and shaking her head violently at her continued in the same breath, "This is disgraceful, Kate — a man in the kitchen. How dare you!"

"You drove me to it," Kate replied quietly.

"Now, no insolence. You must leave this house at once."

"I won't go till to-morrow morning."

"Not till to-morrow morning!"

"Oh, you may be sure I'll go then — no fear."

"You'll go now, this instant." Diamond was trembling with rage. "I'll call a policeman, and I'll have you and this man removed at once."

"You needn't be giving yourself so much trouble, ma'am. Sure, he is a policeman." With a contemptuous jerk of her forefinger Kate indicated the cowering Tom.

"Then I'll take his number and report him."

"Where will you get it?" Kate stepped be-

tween the two, her voice growing louder and firmer. "Let me tell you, Miss Diamond, I've had enough torment and heart-scald from you, and this is to be the end of it. I'll not march out of this place till to-morrow morning, but thank God I'll march out of it then."

"You'll go to-night," repeated Diamond. "I can't have a sinful woman like you sleeping in the same room as that innocent girl Ellen."

"That's fine talk," returned Kate, who was thoroughly roused by this time. "I'll go to-morrow and no sooner. So you'd better spare your breath. It's worse than living in a prison never to see friends. I've as good a right to see mine as you've a right to see yours. You wouldn't give me an evening out, so I'd to invite him in." She turned to Tom again, but he was no longer behind her.

It had so happened that for the first time since he had joined the force 131B found himself not on the side of law and order. It was an undignified and rather terrifying position for a man with his years of service; and the more he had looked at Diamond the more fear had grown upon him. The uncontrollable impulse of flight had seized him, and as lightly and deftly as any hunted criminal he had tiptoed out of the kitchen, wisely extricating himself from an untenable position, just as the battle was developing between the two angry women.

Kate, who had hoped perhaps to receive some help from him, was not deterred by his absence from further speech. She proceeded calmly and

methodically to analyse her employers' character, making pungent comment on certain little idiosyncrasies of theirs — such as hostility and distrust of any male who incautiously ventured near the house, their ideas of freedom, their belief in the divine right of employers, and, finally, their sense of the dignity of the Peacocks of Peacocksville. Not a feather was left in the family's expansive tail by the time Kate thought fit to pause — a pause brought about by the sudden retreat of Diamond to the kitchen door.

"You're getting extremely violent," the old lady snarled huskily, fight still in her eye. "I'm going to call a policeman now, and I shall get him to put you out at once. Do you understand? You're going straight out of the house."

Kate, folding her arms and straightening her tall figure, gazed down at the crumpled old woman, and remarked, not unkindly:

"Well, maybe you've twenty years to live; but may the Almighty God take you as short as you have taken me to-night."

Diamond did not wait to listen to any further wishes that might hurry her before her time into a better land. She sped up the stairs, threw on a few clothes with Lavinia's assistance, and hastened out into the night in search of another member of the D.M.P. In a short while she returned with a stout young policeman of weighty proportions and a wavering spirit. The tale of the night's disturbance, which was soon to become an epic in the Peacock family, had already been told to him three times, and on each occasion in a more highly



coloured way; it was no wonder therefore that resolution oozed from him, and that he halted limply on the door-mat.

"All's quiet, ma'am," he said, arching the lobe of his ear with his hand, an expression of simulated intentness on his fat comfortable face. "I don't hear a sound."

"She's plotting then," said Diamond darkly. "We'd better not delay. It's half-past ten already."

"Let her cool herself, ma'am, let her cool herself," the young man entreated. "Cooks is often a bit cracked and queer. Their brains get disturbed like with the heat of the fire; but they cool very quick, and it's better leave them be — oh, far better."

When Diamond reached the kitchen, her reluctant companion still with her, and still protesting, the place was in darkness, and Kate was not there, having apparently retired to rest. Under the circumstances it scarcely seemed decent to remove her forcibly. And a little later a second member of the force, having made some sage remarks on the cooling and heating properties of cooks, and the methods to be adopted in order to slacken the furnace, retired from 3 Strand View with the comfortable feeling of having done his duty admirably.

Kate had not gone to bed. She was sitting in the darkness of her bedroom, a little disappointed and regretful now that the heat of the battle was past, and she could reflect upon it. She did not regret anything she had said — it was all well said

— but she did regret the fact that 131B, in spite of his great knowledge of the world, his size and impressive manner, his personal charm, was not a whole man after all. He was like others, nice lads many of them, and great company and great entertainment; but he was not the man she wanted, the man she had been looking for, the man she could admire.

## CHAPTER IX

KATE was back at Madame Cooney's "genteel and commodious lodgings," and was sitting in the dingy little parlour relating to her landlady the tale of her life with the Misses Peacock, and with a certain unassuming pride laying special emphasis on that last dramatic scene which had closed the episode, and out of which Kate had come — in her own estimation — so gloriously, with none of her character gone. For if 131B had not visited her, and she had not spoken her mind to Miss Diamond, she would have been dissatisfied and ashamed, feeling that her character was weak, and that she had lost a portion of that precious independence of soul she valued so highly. Madame Cooney, however, took quite a different view of the case. Sighing heavily, this wan creature put down one of the interminable red flannel petticoats she was sewing for her daughter, and made the following pronouncement:

"You're ruined, Miss Carmody. What mistress or what hotel-keeper itself would look at you now, and you without a character from your last place. You might as well go and dig a grave and bury yourself at once. They'll think you not decent and respectable, and they hearing the way it is. Oh, men are that treacherous! Tom Casey had no right to land you into that."

"Sure 'twas I landed him into it, the poor boy, and he got the fright of his life."

"Well, anyway, you're destroyed now, and there'll be no mending you. You'll make no living in Dublin without a character. That's sure."

"Ah, what talk you have!" exclaimed Kate impatiently; "a good cook will pick a living in any place where there's eating and drinking."

"Not in Dublin. They're afeared of a cook with a young man after her. Oh, Miss Carmody, you're a fool to have a young man of your own. Any mistress that knowed it would eat the nose off your face."

"He's not my young man, and he isn't after me, and you have no more sense or reason than a hatching goose," Kate replied indignantly, and left the room as Madame Cooney began to snuffle in a distressing manner. It was partly from genuine grief because of the epithet hurled at her, and partly from the red flannel fluff that floated up her nose. Owing to the weight of the material on her lap she could not, without losing the position of the hem she stitched, reach down to the corner of her apron, and was therefore condemned at the best of times to a spasmodic sniff whenever these garments had to be manufactured.

Two months passed and Kate began to believe that Madame Cooney's prophecy was a true one, for she could find no employment it was possible to accept. The matron at the registry office had received an account of her misdoings from Miss Peacock, and therefore viewed her unfavourably, and was not inclined to press her services upon

clients. She was afraid she would have to leave Dublin and seek work elsewhere; and she had planned out her life in this city, and it was to be a pleasant one spent with an understanding mistress who cherished no venomous feelings towards the male sex. It was hard to have to give up that plan and take again the only sure road, the road across the seas.

She tried to avoid thinking of this, but one evening her courage failed her, and the shadow of regret and disappointment filled her heart. There was to be no future for her in Dublin after all, there was no room for her here with her independent ways. This was the fortieth time she walked along the quay on her way to her lodgings without any change in her circumstances.

A soft orange sunset floated before her, and she noticed how it faded and deepened, colouring the grey buildings in the west. She loved bright colours at any time, and she had seen these sunsets fade and pass each night for the last week as she returned weary and discouraged from the office. They always revived her spirits; they gladdened her heart as well as her eyes with their hopeful promise; and she had become quite fond of them. Ah, she was fond of the old dirty town too and of the careless life that flowed through its streets. Whatever happened she assured herself, even in that moment of depression, she would hold on and not allow herself to be driven from it to the States again.

Madame Cooney was sitting in her parlour brooding over the remnants of an old meal when



Kate entered it. She was in an exalted state of melancholy, and now and then imbibed cold tea poured out from a pot, whose contents had been made two hours before. When she heard there was no news of a place she fixed a watery eye upon her victim and proceeded to make various remarks which were intended to be of a consoling and sympathetic nature.

"I'm sorry for you, Kate, in the flower of your age to come to this. Oh, it'll be downhill — downhill all the time. You'll end by having to take charing, and you'll be thankful if you can get it. Oh, soon you'll be nothing but the remains of old decency."

"Will you leave me alone? I don't want to be talking of myself," Kate replied curtly.

"Well, I don't blame you, but you're very quick with your tongue," the other returned lachrymously. "Anyway, I've a message for you. My cousin, Molly Mulquiney, was here this evening. She's in service with Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Barry is wanting a cook badly. So I was to tell you to go straight to Hatch Street when you come in."

"Straight to Hatch Street!" Kate repeated. "That's news. And you was saying I was going downhill. Glory be, woman, what lamentations you make about nothing at all. I'll be on the crest of the mountain to-night."

"I'm thinking Mrs. Barry won't look at you and she hearing your story."

"Ah, she will, right enough."

"And if she does take you, haven't I more reason to make lamentations? The room upstairs

will be empty, and I'll be losing good money down. Oh, it's a hard, hard world. I'm sure I'll never get a tenant again."

Kate did not wait for the accompanying snuffle, but made off for Hatch Street at once. It took her some little time to find the house, as she had forgotten to ask Madame Cooney for the number. When she found it eventually the door was opened by a pretty girl with curly brown hair and a soft pink complexion. She was as fresh as a spring flower in the hedges, and showed white teeth when she smiled, speaking in a pleasing variety of the Dublin accent.

"You're Kate Carmody," she said. "Hannah Cooney is after telling me about you. Come this way, please."

Kate was pleasantly impressed by the house and also by the appearance of Mrs. Barry. She was a little woman, with a pale face and black hair and eyes. Her dress was neat and trim, and there was a frankness in her glance that inspired confidence. Her pallor, her regular features, and her pretty mouth reminded Kate of a certain American type. Her whole appearance was decidedly American and brought back memories of New York; yet she was Celtic to the finger-tips; the tones of her voice were unmistakably Irish and would have betrayed her nationality in any part of the world.

After ten minutes' conversation they reached the point when it was necessary to relate the tale that had proved a stumbling-block so often, the tale of that last evening at the Peacocks. Kate told it simply, not colouring it in any way, nor

excusing herself. And when the last word had been uttered she looked anxiously across at Mrs. Barry expecting to see the usual frown and to feel the usual chill of manner that always followed the relation of that story. To her immense surprise the little woman greeted it with the glimmer of a smile.

"I know the Miss Peacocks," she remarked meditatively. "I quite understand."

Something in her tone of voice made Kate interrupt her eagerly. "I think if you'd give me a trial, ma'am, you'd find we'd suit. You'd suit me and I'd suit you."

"Well, I can only offer you eighteen pounds a year and your board wages as I told you, but," a twinkle came into Mrs. Barry's eyes, "you may have your friends in in the evening. I've no objection. I quite understand you may want to see a man occasionally. Then by all means see him comfortably in the kitchen if you've finished your work."

Kate greatly desired to step forward and wring this little woman by the hand, which was her method of expressing emotion and a warm regard. However, she checked the impulse, but she felt at one with Mrs. Barry and was ready to scrub innumerable floors, wash linen, make beds and dresses for her, dress her hair, and perform numerous other functions not strictly within the province of a cook.

Not to object to a man in the kitchen occasionally was an amazing instance of tolerance on the part of an employer. Such tolerance was uncanny,

and certainly not to be expected after the many disappointments at the registry office. At best Kate had hoped for some generosity with regard to evenings out when it would be possible to meet friends occasionally and have a life of one's own. To be able to entertain them on the premises, offer them a cup of tea and have a chat, was a delightful prospect, opening up vistas of undreamt-of happiness. What did the difference of twelve pounds a year in wages matter compared to such freedom.

It was with a light heart and a serene confidence in the future Kate packed up her belongings and departed from Madame Cooney's lodgings a week after her interview with Mrs. Barry.

A house is very often the expression of the personality of the woman who reigns in it. A man can only modify that expression by means of his purse. He can, through stinginess, injure it and cramp it, or, if the personality be a common one, by over-lavishness perhaps encourage the flower of vulgarity to burst forth into full bloom; but he cannot utterly destroy the expression of his wife's personality. It will inevitably be written large upon the house as was the case in Hatch Street.

Mrs. Barry was both charming and good-natured, with a love of pretty things for their own sake. So her rooms were pretty, uncommon in appearance and quite unlike any Kate had ever seen before. They were as different to the Misses Peacock's shabby wilderness of ornaments and photographs as the black race is different to the white. No large sums of money had been expended on them, for the Barrys were badly off, yet

they were, as Molly expressed it, "fit to be lived in by a queen."

Certainly Kate, if she had been personally consulted, would have liked more colour in them. She thought a bright red paper, with a bold pattern of monstrous flowers on it, would have made the drawing-room look cosier than a plain fawn-coloured wall. However, she consoled herself with the fact that Mrs. Barry would look very well against that wall in a scarlet velvet tea-gown with brilliant yellow embroidery splashed over it; and she decided to suggest it to her when they were better acquainted, and perhaps offer to make it for her.

Whatever the drawbacks of the drawing-room, the kitchen was all that could be desired, with plenty of pots and pans, and an area gate, which is of very great importance to a house in Dublin, and might almost be described as the key to the situation. For it is a direct means of communication with the outer world, and a consequent convenience when visitors are expected. Besides, it is far simpler to climb the steps to the area gate and view the street from this point of vantage of an evening, to count the cats and the neighbours wandering by, and to chat with a passing friend, than to do so from the hall door, where one is liable to be interrupted by members of the household and perhaps be caught into complications with visitors to the drawing-room.

The household itself was easy to work with, and a quiet one. There were three children, two boys and a girl, the property of Mr. and Mrs.



Barry. Mr. Barry was a distinguished scholar, who spent most of the day in his study, and only in the evenings emerged from it diffidently to meet his friends. He was well known in the world of letters, and had many acquaintances. A great number of men visited him, and Kate had great respect for her mistress because of her success with them, and because of the opinions she expressed. For she had no fancy for a petticoat, and openly confessed to a taste for men's company, and a sense of their entire superiority as regards entertainment and social attractions. But, in spite of a taste for society, she busied herself about her house, and worked shoulder to shoulder with the two maids. She could clean stair rods and brasses more effectively than any one living, and had a wickedly observant eye for dust. She inspired a sense of comradeship, a feeling of loyal co-operation that made both Kate and Molly feel equally responsible for the successful steering of the household through the bad times. Books do not make the pot boil merrily in days of war. Savings had to be effected, and there were many anxious consultations between this competent authority on stair rods and brasses and her cook as to the methods whereby fifteen shillings can be made to buy a pound's worth of goods. Kate's mind was full of ideas in this respect, and she explained to Mrs. Barry how the butcher, through the assurance of regular custom, may be beguiled into supplying meat at a lower rate; how the grocer can be coaxed into giving a modicum of tea when a famine in that beverage is threatened and yet not

put on his price; how much cheaper and more nourishing beef sausages are than pork; how the fishmonger may be persuaded to sell the bits of fish left over on Friday evening at a reasonable price for the purpose of constructing a comparatively cheap fish pie for Saturday's dinner; and finally, how certain shops made a specialty of a certain article, selling it at a cheaper rate than elsewhere, and must be discovered and patronised accordingly, but only in the one particular line.

All these matters require skill and wisdom, and not a little tenacity of purpose; no amateur housekeeper should attempt such difficult feats, but Kate was a professional buyer, she could tell even in the chaos of prices the just value of each article to a nicety, and she could read the dark secrets packed away in the shopkeeper's mind, and if necessary challenge him with them and bring him to terms. Her mistress was only too glad to get her to do the household shopping, and she thoroughly appreciated this particular duty which necessitated a walk abroad nearly every morning, the perusal of various shop windows, and the exercise of her wits.

Life for Kate became again coloured with adventure, that greatest of all adventures — the play and interplay of human beings, and the days passed swiftly and pleasantly by.

## CHAPTER X

MOLLY was of an entirely different mould and make to Kate. She was timid and shy; she would blush for no reason whatever; the most insignificant allusion to herself made her colour up. In every respect she was of a softer nature than her companion. At first sight she appeared to resemble her; they were almost the same height, and each had good colour, but Molly had not that stateliness of carriage that always marked Kate as of a race apart, and Molly was extremely pretty whereas Kate was merely good-looking. The former was town-bred and knew no land save the soil of Dublin city. Her innocence was extreme and her knowledge of the world and the male so minute that Kate labelled her "a greenhorn" before they had been two days in the house together, and endeavoured to instil into her some broad general precepts that are efficacious in the treatment of this rather important being. The two women matched each other very well, and generally Kate ruled save when there was a spring cleaning or when Molly's nerves gave way and she flew into a temper. At such a crisis Kate, who was infinitely the stronger of the two, used to stretch her out on the kitchen table and tickle her until she had screeched all the breath out of her body. If the patient did not even then respond to this gentle

massage and remained sullen Kate surrendered to her rule until such time as she regained her normal equilibrium.

Molly suffered from nerves and small ailments. She had had to go to hospital once for an operation, and the quantities of ether imbibed by her then had left a deep impression on her mind. Her mysterious gusts of rage were to be accounted for by this sweet sickening poison, which she believed still ran riot in her blood. "Sure the aether went to me head," was her invariable apology, "'twasn't my fault at all." Indeed such a slight disturbance as occasional eruptions of temper seemed to Molly a matter for deep thankfulness, for she believed that for seven years after an operation accompanied by ether the patient was liable to fits of insanity. Madame Cooney had known scores of such cases and frequently warned her cousin that she would probably be incarcerated for some short period of her life in an asylum.

A feeling for order is born in us and can rarely be manufactured if the instinct is not latent in us. There is no real cure for the eye that receives no irritable impression from chaos, the eye which is, on the whole, stimulated by confusion. Kate was the soul of disorder whereas Molly was the soul of order. But Kate was not a victim of moods, her temperament was equable and self-contained. On the other hand, Molly's temperament was quite unsystematic, quite without order; it made rushes at things like a wild colt frolicking in a field, and on occasions needed a steady hand to guide it. There were moments when Molly would complain

of being jaded and that she could not support the stairs, and then the house was filled with her sighs, and little jobs necessary to perfect comfort in a house were overlooked. Yet she was in other moods a marvel to work and a wonder at that great crisis of the year, the spring cleaning. During this critical period, when the house runs water and soap, when the whole household is suspended in air as it were and man can find no place upon which to rest the sole of his foot, she would move the heaviest furniture incredible distances without a murmur, she would clean and sweep ceaselessly and was always in the thick of the fray beating out of existence the last least speck of dirt and grit. Whereas Kate, whenever possible, would retire to the dimmest confines of the kitchen or the cellar and remain there until all was over. Once she was quite sure the dust had been laid for another year she would come out placid and serene, while Molly, heated and disturbed in mind and temper, would sink into the old chair by the fire groaning and complaining of the pains in her bones. Kate did not shrink from work, but the cleaning of the upstairs rooms seemed to her absurd and unnecessary when it necessitated taking down curtains, ripping up carpets, and moving every stick of furniture on to the landing. On principle she kept away from it as much as possible and would make up by washing the sheets and various garments of the mistress that generally went to the outside laundry, by cooking a particularly dainty dinner, and by offering to run up on the sewing machine every kind of costume from bathing to



ball dresses, assuring Mrs. Barry that all could be adequately constructed on the old machine.

In truth Kate and Molly fitted into each other like a puzzle and derived much mutual benefit from each other's society. The former had soon many male acquaintances among the tradespeople and shopkeepers, and their ways and manner of living, the number of relatives and wives they had buried, or the girls they had probably walked out with and their personal appearance and character were a topic of absorbing interest both for herself and her companion. Men surrendered their secrets easily to Kate; she soon unwound the skein of their lives with her clever tongue and sharp eye, and this power over the male was one of the great pleasures of her life. After a few weeks' acquaintance the milkman asked her for her advice on a matrimonial question. He was fifty-three and had never been married. He had been courting a girl for years and she had finally jilted him after a brief engagement. He wanted very badly to get her back, but was afraid of going to her or writing to her for fear she might think him too fond of her. It was a delicate point, and Kate, after surveying his scanty grey hairs and withered appearance, and after weighing in the balance his real earnestness of purpose, felt that it would be unwise for him to wait any longer and advised a direct offensive on a huge scale at once. She must be taken by storm, her defences carried with a rush.

The grocer's boy had often confidences to make, for though his years were few, only numbering

seventeen, he had already broken his heart several times. Being a restless soul he could never concentrate on one girl at once and therefore disaster followed him. Molly was inclined to be sympathetic, but Kate spoke severely to him, urging for other people's sake, if not for his own, a destruction of the butterfly tendency in his nature, or, at least, an absorbed attention to the one flower at the one time.

131B was not forgotten, and in spite of his cowardly behaviour on the night of the Peacock engagement he was invited to spend an evening in the kitchen at Hatch Street. Kate was anxious to see him and to find out what his disposition was with regard to herself, and also what was his opinion of that unfortunate episode. He might be feeling aggrieved at having been led into such an ambush; he might very legitimately feel hurt at his person being made the subject of insulting remarks by an elderly female. However, as soon as she saw him she knew this was not the case; knew that he was ashamed of himself, for his eye was furtive, his manner apologetic, and apparently he wished to avoid discussing that bird of ill omen, the Peacock. The word did not pass his lips, and his fulsome greetings and complacency of manner were extreme.

Molly was slightly alarmed by his height and breadth of chest, by his extreme muscularity of appearance. Large men made her feel uncomfortable and uneasy; their mere physique seemed to overwhelm her and check any easy flow of speech; she infinitely preferred a small compact man; he

could not look down upon her, and he therefore put her at her ease. A large man, especially a policeman, seemed so far off and aloof, a being awesome in appearance, enthroned in his own dignity as it were — like a great mountain peak that can only be viewed with respect from immeasurable distance, that one can never hope to be familiar with, never hope to scale.

131B took little heed of her; he was anxious to talk to Kate, and having settled himself down into the largest chair in the kitchen, broke into voluble speech. He proceeded to discuss the characteristics of northerners and southerners much to the detriment of the north. "They're too stiff and saucy, the Munster people are free and easy, and are much better sport. Faith, the northerners think themselves young dukes and duchesses; but we've no such opinion of ourselves at all." At the completion of this statement, while covertly eyeing the two women, he gave a shake to his mighty shoulders, and waved his hand in a lordly fashion, which was as much as to say, "I'm a fine-looking man myself, but I think nothing of it."

"And what's your opinion of the people in the west?" queried Kate coolly, not taking the least notice of this magnificence of gesture though Molly stared at it open-eyed.

"I don't know much about the west," he replied. "But they do say the County Clare people are half mad; they have little cows no bigger than sheep; and they all go milking them in the evening. I know one Carol from Clare, and he's a rough kind of fellow."

"Did you let on to Joe Spillane I was in Dublin?" Kate interrupted his tale rather rudely, partly to show Molly that this wonderful being was no more than the dirt of the earth to her, and partly to convey to him that she wasn't in the least impressed by his evident desire to please.

"I told him you was here," was the chastened reply.

"I mind him when he was a little lad before old Joe Spillane went to Wexford."

"Ay so. Maybe you didn't hear what happened him. He fell over Bohernabreena cliffs one day in a great wind. They said 'twas the way he was drunk, but he wasn't. Sure, he'd only three pints drank. I'm thinking he was mentally drunk but physically sober and 'twas the wind that did the rest. Howsomever, I looked over the cliff for his body, and I saw him lying with a smile on his face and the half of his head gone — scattered over the rocks."

"Almighty God! the poor man!"

"There's his knock now. I thought maybe you'd like to see him for the sake of old times."

"But wasn't he killed dead?" exclaimed Molly breathlessly; "the half of his head scattered over the rocks."

"The miracle was that the doctor took him to the dispensary and stitched up his face again, and he was better than he ever was in his life within the month."

"D'you tell me now!" Molly turned and gaped at the area door which Kate was opening. She expected to see a horribly scarred face, a

countenance marked and maimed irremediably, at any rate a little wisp of a man that a sea wind might flick over a cliff as a boot flicks a stone at pitch and toss, but instead there appeared a far stouter, rosier young man than Tom, a man that seemed to fill the kitchen with his presence, and before whom Kate was dwarfed into abject insignificance. When the first greetings were over and the introduction made, Kate sat down beside this enormous personage, and entered into an animated conversation with him. 131B made several attempts to join in it, but was each time repelled, no notice being taken of his remarks. He renounced his easy reclining position in his chair and sat up very straight, gazing across at Kate with something of the glassy reproachful stare of a dead fish in the expression of his eyes. This deathly glare seemed to have no effect; she was apparently quite unconcerned, laughing occasionally and chatting away with Joe Spillane, offering him, just as if he were the guest of the evening, the first cup of tea from the pot.

Molly felt she should entertain Tom, felt that all the rules of hospitality demanded it of her; but her mind grew quite confused when she tried to think of something to say. It was so hard to know what would interest him. If a girl had been there it would have been quite a different matter; she would have discussed dresses and shop windows, the wonders of Grafton Street, the toilettes that passed in and out of the Shelbourne Hotel; how one should do one's hair, whether in the egg shape, like the nose of a teapot or in the sober



roundness of a bun. They would have deplored the fact that invisible hairpins were no longer obtainable; that according to rumour all hairpins would soon disappear from the shops as the stock available for their manufacture was to be devoted to the making of munitions; that consequently, as ribbons were so expensive, they would be reduced to boot-laces and odd bits of string for the retaining of their hair in the shape required by fashion. Here was subject matter enough for a whole evening's talk. But, instinctively Molly felt that these interesting and enthralling items of conversation would only bore a man, or, worse still, outrage his great intellect. So her mind fell back at last upon that old worn-out theme, the weather. With a dryness of voice that comes from nerves and from not having used it for some little time Molly tentatively addressed 131B.

"It's lovely weather, Mr. Casey."

"Beautiful — beautiful," he replied, sucking the knob of his cane hungrily and gazing at Kate.

"It's strange it keeps so fine at this time of year."

"Very strange." The knob of the stick must have been half gnawed away by this time so fiercely did the big jaws close about it.

"Sun and drought."

"Sun and drought."

There was a pause, then Molly began desperately again. "You'd wonder at the amount of rain that's after falling — torrents from the skies." She had been confused by her failure to elicit anything but monosyllabic replies from the

great man, and had completely contradicted herself, and now, recognising her error, was worse confounded.

131B, however, noticed nothing, and replied in the same monotonous manner, "You'd wonder indeed."

Molly, fearing to risk further remarks that might betray an even more abject foolishness of mind, relapsed into silence. Kate, after this failure, would regard her as a mere girl who was quite unable to keep up a conversation with a man of intellectual attainments, and she wished the flags of the kitchen would draw apart and a rush of air suck her down into the bowels of the cellars — anywhere away from these two gigantic personages.

Mr. Spillane was not a very brilliant conversationalist, but, conscious that he was the figure of the evening, he was endeavouring to make some profound remarks about farming, one of the few subjects in which he believed Tom could not outmatch him and spread himself in a profusion of words. "Wexford is a tillage country," he was saying, "they don't make much butter or rear many calves. They grow beans and vetch, and it's a grand potato country. They export to England. And as for bees and honey, it's wonderful altogether; my father makes thirty pounds a year in bees."

"And what kind of men do they rear?" inquired Kate.

"Oh, the men of County Wexford are lovely altogether, and it's a country full of old fellows

without teeth; it's healthy I suppose." Mr. Spillane paused, not being able to think of anything further to say about the boys of Wexford. But becoming intensely aware of the cold glare of 131B, he felt that it would be advisable to continue if he wished to retain his position in the eyes of the women. Any stupid talk will do a man; a woman, especially one like Kate, must at all costs be suitably impressed, either by wit or deep learning, and he cast about desperately in the byways of his mind for some profound reflection.

"They're great for rearing geese in Wexford," he announced after a long search. "Oh, you couldn't beat them in the four provinces for geese. They're wonderful altogether."

"What a fool you are to be sure not to know a goose when you see one," Tom eyed his fat comrade sternly, and then turned to Kate with a lofty air of detached wisdom. "Don't mind him, the Wexford geese are all bones and gristle. Oh, there's no geese like the County Cork geese. Soft and tender they are."

"Ah, Tom, you'd better take out your brains and wash them," replied Kate, a note of calm compassion in her voice. "What do you know about geese? A Cork goose is as tough as that table. Oh, they've no ideas about rearing geese in Cork at all."

The theme of geese, young and old, fat and lean, was tossed to and fro between them, with much anger and fury of words on the part of the men, for nearly half an hour. Tom lost his temper completely; after a little while he realised that

Kate was laughing at him, and with a great effort he pulled himself together and determined to teach her a lesson.

"Do you play the piano, Miss Mulquiney?" he inquired, turning to Molly, of whose presence he had been apparently unconscious until that moment. The question was a subtle compliment. The great ambition of a farmer's daughter is to possess a piano and to learn to strum on it. Inasmuch as this accomplishment and this possession are an indication of immense wealth and ease, and also a mark of superior education, indicating the fact that the performer has had the privilege of attending a convent school, and has not gone with the common crowd to a national school.

Molly, quite sensible of the compliment, blushed and stammered a little as she replied, "I do not play the piano, but I've a great fancy for it, Mr. Casey."

"The piano is a gorgeous instrument — gorgeous." 131B rolled out the adjective with such a luxuriance of sound, such a defiance of manner, that no ordinary mortal would have dared to contradict such a statement.

"Ah, sure, the piano is only a jingly old graveyard of bones," said Kate contemptuously; "now I like a good noisy hullabaloo on a drum, or the pipes itself, and a swinging dance tune."

131B took no notice of this irritating contradiction, addressing Molly as if she were the only occupant of the room, "Do you sing, Miss Mulquiney?"

"I do — only a little."

Much to her confusion, Molly was there and then pressed in a most moving manner to render up a song at once. It was no use complaining of a weak throat, of the damp or of a forgetful memory, this compelling man scattered these excuses with one contemptuous gesture. 131B wished for a song; that was sufficient. Molly, though she was trembling with agitation, and hated singing to these two strangers, without any further questioning bent her will to his word. It was beyond the bounds of reason to refuse such a personage when he persisted in his request, and stated that it was really a matter of moment to him.

She chose Moore's melodies, and sang in a small, sweet, quavering voice of the departure of the minstrel boy, of the dead harp on Tara's walls, and of the collar of gold that was won from the proud invader. At the end of these, 131B, whose eyes were moist with genuine emotion, entreated her to continue, and, in spite of her own diffidence and embarrassment, she felt compelled to sing "My Dark Rosaleen."

Her voice was husky; it was not as good a performance as the others; she was afraid she had failed, and regretted ere the last note had broken across the kitchen that she had chosen such a difficult melody. However, her listeners were very flattering in their praise of her powers. 131B uttered words to the effect that he had been pining away for lack of music; that his life was a desert, his soul numbed, owing to the fact that he could not sing himself, and that none of his companions could express themselves in musical



terms. She had given him an evening he would long remember; he could not thank her enough for it.

She blushed and stammered, trying to think of something nice to say in return, and feeling how poor were her phrases in comparison with his. They did not stay very long after her singing, as they had to be on duty at midnight, and though their remarks were delightful, and warmed her heart, she felt relieved when they departed.

There was a guilty flush of triumph in her cheeks when Kate returned from the area gate after seeing the two heavy men clamber up the steps to the street. Kate had been taken very little notice of during the last half hour, especially little by 131B, who was decidedly the more attractive of the two men. They were her guests after all, and it was with a mingled feeling of remorse and triumph that Molly remarked apologetically:

"It must have been dull for you, Kate, to be hearing me singing them old songs. Mr. Casey and Mr. Spillane are very nice, but they'd a right not to talk so much about them when they come to see you. I was really sorry for you, and I'd have liked to have stopped them." She regretted this tactless speech as soon as she had made it, realising that it was conceited, that it pointed a finger at herself, as it were, as the figure of the evening.

"Sorry for me!" exclaimed Kate; "why, I'd the time of my life. Didn't you see the game I was playing, annoying 131B by taking no notice of him. And in the heel the big stupid man

thought he'd play the same trick on me by paying you great attentions. Oh, he was a perfect theatre; I coiled with laughter at him." A long billowy roll of this same laughter checked further speech on Kate's part, while Molly stared at her dumbfounded. It had been a game after all, and it was not her own attractions but merely temper which had led this great man to pay her such high compliments.

She realised suddenly some of the misery of that rhythmic motion in life which apparently drives us on to the crest of the wave for the mere purpose of dashing us down into abysmal depth unknown to us before when the current of life flowed monotonously and smoothly by. She was ashamed of herself, horribly ashamed, for she had taken what he had said literally and must have cut a ridiculous figure.

The pretty flush on Molly's cheeks fled from them, she drooped her head, and wishing with all the pessimistic fervour of youth that she had never been born to be made such a fool of, crept silently to bed.

## CHAPTER XI

IN a short space of time the fact that 131B admired Molly was patent to the least observant. He had started by wishing to make reprisals on Kate, by playing the same game as her own. The game had become a serious affair. He had really felt the sentiments he had expressed with regard to Molly's singing. He only wished that he could express, with the same eloquence, what he felt with regard to her general appearance; but in this more personal matter he was timid, and he had to be content with gazing at her as long as it was seemly for any young man to gaze at any young woman.

For Molly the depression of that first evening was only like one heavy foreboding spring shower. It was past now and she revelled in the warm sunshine that followed. The savour and scent that comes with the first real sun of the year is the sweetest; and to her there was a strange, rather terrifying pleasure in the companionship and admiration of this huge policeman. She had never been admired by any one before — never been conscious of a man's gaze following her. It was a wonderful experience and made her heart beat fast at times. She had no brothers and had always lived with women, so men, until now, had been to her like some queer animals, very formid-

able, very inexplicable, only to be viewed at a distance. Instinct warned her to avoid them, and when she was not actually in Tom's presence she wanted to avoid him because he frightened her and she did not know what to say to him: she was afraid lest he should find out the smallness of her intellect, lest he should make the dreadful discovery that she was not interested in the lofty themes of the universe, but merely in the prices of clothes, hair-dressing, shop windows and the interiors of houses. Worst of all, she was afraid of the unknown in him. In spite of such fears she could not drag herself away when he paid an evening call, and watched him like a fascinated bird, enjoying his homage. It was not surprising, therefore, that she was unable to refuse him one eventful afternoon when he begged her to come out for a walk. The matter was arranged in a few minutes between him and Kate. For it happened to be the latter's afternoon out, but she said she did not wish to go anywhere and that Molly looked pale and should get a little air.

That walk was a whirl of excitement, pleasure and fear. 131B started by embarrassing her considerably with many inquiries after her health and with remarks about her delicate appearance which were extremely gratifying, but very trying as, in spite of all her efforts to remain calm and composed, that crimson flush would creep up her cheeks and forehead, and she felt that he noticed her rising colour. With an effort she managed to change the topic of conversation to the sights of Dublin and the qualities of the people in that

ancient city. The theme was a fortunate one, for Tom's knowledge of Ireland's metropolis was vast. After a brief survey of her monuments, ecclesiastical and secular, he pierced the dark mists of history, and, having traversed fabulous thousands of years in a mighty wind of words, brought to light facts that seemed to prove the Danish origin of Dubliners once and for all. Perhaps the most evidential of these was their curious method of speech, their invariable habit in modern times of talking as if they had a bad cold in their nose. He was confident no pure-blooded Celt could suffer from this nasal idiosyncrasy. The Celts were too great and fine a race to bear anything but noble and uncongested noses through which the airs of Heaven easily and freely flowed. It was regrettable that the sea rovers should have left this mark upon the race. However, worse things might have occurred. God knows what would have happened, what awful nasal complications might have ensued if Brian Boru had not finally beaten the Danes at the battle of Clontarf. Oh, there was much to be thankful for; the patriots in abusing England and the Almighty for Ireland's sorrows should at least take this one mercy into account. The argument was of a complicated pattern, and Molly's head buzzed like a trapped bee as she tried to follow its winding curves, and many times she had to say "I beg your pardon," and when there came a repetition and still she could not understand, desperately endeavour to look wise.

Stephen's Green was crowded with children



screaming, kicking, hitting each other and rolling in the mutilated grass. 131B, suddenly diving back from ancient pagan times, from bearded Vikings and their kind, proceeded to make severe comments on the families in Fitzwilliam Lane and on their extraordinary powers of expansion, on their evident belief that Stephen's Green was their own particular property. It was monstrous, but only a part and parcel of the corporation's imbecility. The Green had been laid out for the benefit of couples, not for the benefit of nurseries. Under the circumstances, however, it was impossible to have an easy and comfortable conversation with a friend, and he suggested a penny tram ride and the more select and seemly surroundings of Herbert Park.

Molly readily acquiesced, she thought it would be very choice; and half an hour later they were sitting on a seat near the concrete pond of this prim suburban park. It was then that 131B became extremely conscious of his companion's presence. Her face, with its pretty colour, small features and innocent expression, disorganised his thinking powers and scattered the multitude of words that were usually thronging to his lips. Silence fell upon the two. He watched her closely while she modestly averted her eyes; and his policeman's soul was moved to rapture, and he desired greatly to finger her brown curls and to touch her small hands, holding them in his large palm for a period unmentionable — until the end of the world, and after if possible, so strong was his craving, so wonderful the might of his desire.

These blissful moments, which seem to include all space and time, are curiously fleeting. 131B began to be uncomfortable. It was not usual for him to have these peculiar sensations. It was only with an effort he had checked an almost uncontrollable impulse to slide his arm round Molly. His mind woke up; the matter was getting serious and required looking into. He scarcely knew the girl, and had as yet, so far as he knew himself, no serious intentions with regard to her. Of one fact only in connection with her he was sure. He must not remain seated on that bench any longer.

For a little while Molly had felt extraordinarily happy, but now his uneasiness communicated itself to her, and before he could move his slow body she had jumped up murmuring that it was drawing late and that she must return to Hatch Street. The excuse was quite an artificial one as they both well knew, and he succeeded in persuading her to take another penny tram and to have tea with him at a D.B.C. on the north side of Stephen's Green.

Molly had rarely experienced such pure joy as in those exquisite few minutes when, for the first time in her life, she had a meal in a restaurant in the company of this remarkable-looking man. She was conscious that various other couples were watching them covertly and that the waitresses were most obsequious in their attentions to his teapot and his table. He was inclined to be gloomy and meditative, and the thoughts he gave utterance to were of a somewhat cynical nature, dealing with the hideousness of the people who, like themselves, were chewing dry war bun and drinking tea,

and also with the rather serious possibility that at the present rate of consumption beef and Guinness' stout would soon be a luxury only within the reach of the multi-millionaire. However, he cheered up considerably as he accompanied her back to Hatch Street. For he explained to her eloquently and at length how he would spend five or six millions of pounds if by chance some railway king or pork emperor decided to leave him that sum. It was quite a likely contingency as relatives of his had gone to America some fifteen years before and he had heard nothing of them since. If they were poor he would most certainly have heard of them. So the chances of a great inheritance were all in his favour. Molly quite agreed; this was a perfectly lucid argument, the first of his that she had been able to follow clearly and been able to perceive its logical sequence. Such magnificence appealed to her imagination, causing him to rise very considerably in her estimation, and it was with a feeling of happy awe and inexpressible gratitude she took leave of him at the area gate.

Kate quite approved of the growing intimacy between Molly and Tom. She did not find the big man of interest at the moment. She wanted to make explorations in unknown country; a number of new male acquaintances claimed her attention. Like a child with a clock she wished to take them to pieces, to get to know every part of the works. There was James Delaney, a plain-clothes detective, Carol a shoemaker, Terry Finny who was a man of property and owned cabs, Pats the old news vendor who sold her *Erin's Own* every week,

Mr. Fagan a young grocer's assistant with a most beautiful curl like a cock's comb always waving over his low forehead, Joe Spillane and several others with whom she had a greater or less degree of acquaintance. She had many chats with each of them in any time she had to spare, so she was genuinely glad that Tom and Molly were occupied with each other, for the former was of a rather jealous disposition, and might have tried to interfere while she was endeavouring to follow out in all its maze of details that complicated jig-saw puzzle, the temperament and nature of a man. She was still searching for "a whole man," and there was a calm conviction in her mind that some day she would find him, some day she would view him in all his glory.

Other matters also occupied her attention. She was a good dressmaker, and she took a lively and professional interest in clothes of every variety and kind. Their study was a mild but engrossing amusement, giving her much food for thought and much pleasurable planning. It was not for herself alone she planned. Any woman she met out of doors with a graceful or remarkable figure, an attractive or hideous appearance was subject matter for a design. For a short distance she would track the unknown individual she had chosen as a theme, following her down quite uninteresting streets, striving to make a mental picture of her in a certain costume, and she obtained as much delight from the construction of it, the various materials used, their quality and their price, as an ardent collector obtains from his curios. There

are certain broad general principles. A short, fat woman, with a rolling gait, must be clad in a garment that is loose and flowing and must avoid light colours and waistbands. Young girls, with "cute figures," might with advantage adopt brilliant shades. Rose colouring, or what might be described as a sunset effect, in hat or costume added considerably to the pleasures of those who strolled abroad. Indeed it was in the public interest that a little brightness should be introduced into the grey streets. And though Kate did not regard herself as a young girl any longer, her favourite outfit on a fine day consisted of a scarlet plaid blouse, an emerald-green skirt and the yellow hat she had christened "the gosling."

Further, in regard to dress, the tall and lean, the walking skeletons, also presented their problem. Indeed it was difficult to make them decorative. They should most certainly cover up all angularities and wear full blouses, and their chests, in most cases, should be padded. For Kate objected emphatically to a lack of bosom. It was, in her opinion, as great a deformity as flat feet or a squint. What was really puzzling was the fact that these broad seemingly immutable principles could be very often upset — upset by the most insignificant of women. Features of course made a difference, and a long hawklike nose and pumpkin-shaped heads very often spoiled the symmetry of a costume that would otherwise have been excellent. Such complications added to the interest of the study and much strategy was required in order to overcome them.



Occasionally, in her leisure moments, in spite of a large and growing circle of acquaintances, Kate suffered from a stupid ache that took the form of a craving for country life and country occupations — the rearing of ducks and geese, the collection of eggs, all the interesting and intricate problems connected with the hen-house and the chicken-coop, milking and churning, the lore of crops and weather, the ever varying difficulties that have to be faced and overcome with each fresh season. Sometimes she hungered merely for the colours of the fields, the lights upon the rolling country, dark earth turned up by the plough, the lowing of cattle, and the call of birds. If there were no company at hand this hunger could often be cured by her occupying her mind with research. She would either pore over that remarkable fashion paper *Vogue*, which was lent her by Mrs. Barry, or she would go out and gaze at the windows of draper's shop after draper's shop until the pain was stilled.

There were times when, tired of designing costumes for other people, she would concentrate upon herself, devising a multiplicity of dresses of every shade and hue. Then, if she had a free afternoon, it was her custom to cross town to Henry Street, where drapers' shops abound and where prices are of not too disturbing a nature.

Arnott's, on the left-hand side of the street, was rather too expensive from her point of view, though she could not bring herself to walk straight past it and always stopped to scrutinise its wares. She had an unquenchable passion for checks, and

in one particular season there was a whole window full of checks to contemplate with the label "As worn" on each one of them. Of these a lovely purple and dark red material pleased her most, and she went there merely for the purpose of gazing at it on twelve separate occasions. Unfortunately, it was beyond her means, but she could bear away precious memories of it, and in hours of moodiness killed the ache for farm life and farm work with its gorgeous stripe.

On the opposite side, a little farther down, Henry Street Warehouse beckoned to her. Here a brilliant display of blouses enchanted the eye; they were in the bright colours Kate loved and were both "snug" and "cute" in her opinion. Each one was mysteriously enhanced in value by an attractive label setting forth its origin; and the words "Paris Model" and "Exclusive Model" were enough to set her heart beating rapidly.

She was sorely tempted by a blouse of salmon pink styled "For dinner wear." If the necessary money had been lying in her purse she would have walked into the warehouse and purchased this superb creation the first day she laid eyes on it. As she never dined out there would have been an especial gratification in wearing a garment others might have worn for that purpose. Unfortunately, her purse did not fill up sufficiently rapidly, and one afternoon the salmon pink was whipped from off the lay figure by a ruthless shopgirl and the place of its glory knew it no more.

Kate, however, was soon comforted. She dis-

covered at the Melba House in Merrion Row a dress that was a feast to the eye, that eclipsed all other creations she had known. The Melba House had the advantage of being opposite the Co-operative shop which she visited several mornings in the week in order to purchase sundry articles of food for the household; it also had the advantage of being one of the most interesting and striking draper's establishments in the city of Dublin. For there was always a sale going on; other shops had summer sales and autumn sales; this one made every day of the year notable by offering to the passing throng to sell off its goods at enormous reductions. After-season sales, autumn, summer and winter sales, red-letter and anniversary sales divided up the seasons for it. Its philanthropy stirred the cynical heart and even caught the attention and often the custom of those ladies who deal with the firms their grandparents dealt with, who bind themselves in the folly of ancestor worship to hereditary butchers, bakers and drapers. After all, if they did fall before temptation nearly every article in the window of the Melba was a "give away." Here was a sky-blue "crêpe de Chine blouse for 2s. 11d., worth 29s.," there were beautiful gloves, "throw-offs from the manufacturers, price 2s. 11d., value 5s. 11d. up to 15s." It was not surprising, therefore, that at all hours of the day a sprinkling of women with lean anxious faces stood there as if rooted to the pavement in an ecstasy of contemplation.

The dress that Kate admired was a flowered silk with a white ground. There were great cauliflowers the colour of beetroot spread over it, pale pink flowers in shape resembling lilies and many others not known in the botanical world were mingled with them. The designer of the frock had evidently possessed a prodigal imagination. All possible and impossible colours had been used by him in this tropical vegetation; his had been no niggardly mind, and his effects were of a satisfying brilliance. They gave consolation to Kate when at this time an annoyance of an unforeseen kind beset her, disturbing the even flow of her life.

The disturbance was caused by a letter from Eugene, a letter that brought back memories of Droumavalla, the desolate farm and the old people who lived in it. She felt injured and distressed. He had no right to attempt to communicate with her after the way she had spoken to him. But she read and re-read the little scrap of writing penned by a stiff muscular hand and carried it about until it was nearly worn out in the bosom of her dress.

"DEAR KATE," it ran, "How are you getting on? I suppose you know a crowd of high up people in Dublin now. It's strange and lonesome here and the quiet would put the heart across you sometimes. The work is very heavy with only a boy to help me. Mother is in bed altogether now and the old man is like a raging bull. I can please him no ways at all. Bedad, then, it's glad in my heart I'd be to see a bit of your writing if you'd a moment to spare.

"I'm thinking I'm getting queer with the loneliness. The old man goes to the fairs, to Middleton and to Cork, and I haven't the heart or the time itself to go over to the village. So I have no one to talk to at all.

"I will be watching for the posts now. So do not be forgetting me.

"EUGENE TURPIN.

"P.S.—Do you remember the word we had? Would you be changing your mind sometime, do you think? For I will never be changing mine."

There was little enough in the letter and yet it told all. Eugene was suffering, and it pained Kate to think of him so. It was quite wrong that such a gentle, fine young man should be unhappy, with no one to talk to, should be living there all by his lone. And then her pity would turn to anger. It was his own fault. Why was he so weak? Why would he not stand up to his father? Why did he allow himself to be trampled on by that old brute? There was no strength, no good in him at all. She had nothing to reproach herself with for refusing him. She could not have borne such a life under the old man's heel, afraid to say a word to him, compelled to obey his outrageous commands because of Eugene. But far more bitter to her would have been her sense of the latter's weakness, and daily companionship would have made it more and more apparent. He was only half a man, and yet reminded her continually of the brothers who were gone. He was their shadow, not their real self, and had all a shadow's deformities.

In spite of these thoughts Kate read his letter every day until she knew the words by heart and could repeat them over to herself; and with each sentence a picture came into her mind of the day's doings — Eugene driving in the cows through the grey morning, drawing a white stream of milk



from them, driving them back into the fields again. After that there were the calves and pigs to be fed, and later land to be ploughed up — no rest for him till dark came again. He dreaded a long day of heavy ploughing because of his lameness and because of the scourge of his father's tongue. She hated to think of him bearing the old man's abuse in sullen silence, painfully limping up the long furrow, hated to think of him sitting in the lonely kitchen of a winter evening worn out with the day's toil, neither gratitude nor even recognition of his labour falling to his share. And her mind was full of these pictures of him borne upon the wings of his written word, and peace and happiness fled from her.

"The master's down this half hour and the breakfast's not cooked! Sure I might as well be yoked with a cabbage, and I working with you." The irritation in Molly's voice roused Kate from one of the reveries that had so frequently fallen on her of late. She did not answer back, feeling the justice of this last remark, and hurried with her work, making up by immoderate speed for the few minutes when her mind was away.

Later, when the kitchen breakfast and the upstairs breakfast were over and the mistress had come down to order the dinner and consult about the domestic economy of the household, Kate determined to seek counsel from her if an opportunity presented itself. It would not be sought in a serious way which would lead her to suspect

something was amiss, but in a half-joking manner disguised in the cloak of pleasant small talk.

When the meals had been disposed of, she cunningly led up to her theme by making certain broad statements about mankind in general, and then narrowing them down into a history of the shoemaker.

"Henessy is a queer kind of man," she was saying. "He has three children, and he's after burying a wife. The day of the funeral he was bawling crying, asking them to bury him with her, and the very next day he was looking for a new wife to sit on his hearth. And when I held up the old wife to him and asked him if he wasn't ashamed of himself to be in that hurry, says he to me, 'Well, and isn't she as dead as she'll ever be?' Would you believe that now? Oh, Lord, he's dangerous."

"Indeed he is," commented Mrs. Barry. "You'd better avoid him."

"Oh, he's a decent enough little bit of a fellow, with a band of crape in his hat that deep"—Kate illustrated its width with an outspread thumb and forefinger—"and a head as red as the centre of the fire. But what kind of a heart can he have at all?"

"As much as most men have, and that's little enough," replied Mrs. Barry, shaking her head with a laugh.

"But sure they're very quick to tell you they're breaking it for you, aren't they now?" said Kate with simulated lightness.

"I expect you've great experience. You must have broken some in your time, Kate."

"Well, I don't know about that. It's queer and easy, ma'am, to be breaking a man's heart. Sure, I never broke mine at all and never will."

"Of one thing you may be quite sure," said Mrs. Barry in the same light way, "you need never mind breaking a man's heart, for what there is of it is very easily mended."

"I suppose that's really so," was her listener's speculative reply.

"Of course it is. Oh, there's nothing in the world more easily mended," the other continued gaily, "so if you're not serious yourself you needn't have any qualms about sending him off at once. They tell me you can get sausages threepence a pound cheaper in Richmond Street. Wouldn't it be well to try there when you're out to-day?" It was Mrs. Barry's habit to leap abruptly from one subject into another. Sausages and human hearts she would heap together in the same breath, never attempting to sort them and deliver them in their own time and place. In the space of one quarter of an hour in the morning she had frequently discussed with her husband the shallow ugliness of imagist poetry, denounced the Food Controller to Kate, in company with a friend lavished praise on the poetic dramas of Mr. Yeats, made wise statements about the cooking of mutton-chops, criticised the opera company at the Gaiety Theatre, and having invented a whole new evening attire for a few shillings as she cleaned the stair rods, imparted it between each vigorous rub in

broken mutterings to Molly. Fresh thoughts and ideas winged their way through her mind like the rapid flight of birds. Indeed, in her active intelligence and quick grasp of her subject she greatly resembled Kate, requiring a crowd of acquaintances with whom she could discuss these swift travellers.

Quite inadvertently, with a few light words, she had helped to shape a destiny that morning. For discussion is not always born in Dublin — as is the common belief — merely to fly up the chimney and evaporate with the smoke. Kate's mind was made up. The words "You need never mind breaking a man's heart, for what there is of it is easily mended" had decided her. She had no doubt now as to the course of action it was necessary to take; it was all quite simple; it was strange it had not occurred to her before.

She must destroy this web of memories — throw them off her. They were sucking all the sweetness out of her life and coming between her and her work. She must never think of Droumavalla or Eugene again.

The letter required much writing and rewriting, and when, after two sleepless nights, it was finally composed and penned it scarcely covered a half sheet of paper.

DEAR EUGENE — It was good of you to write to me. But I never will change my mind, and I do not want to hear from you or see you again.

KATE.

This letter, once it was despatched, gave her great relief. She could put all her dark memories behind her now and take pleasure in the pleasant

life that stretched before her. And late one evening she believed she had done for ever with the past when the last red cinder of the fire devoured his poor scrap of writing.



## CHAPTER XII

ONE evening, on Kate's invitation, 131B dropped in for an hour or so, bringing with him his friend James Delaney, a plain-clothes detective. James had an unassuming appearance, a pale earnest face and the pleasing manners of a shop-walker in a rather select establishment. Kate monopolised him as she always quite unconsciously monopolised every fresh visitor to the kitchen. She was rewarded on this occasion by the personal reminiscences of the detective; he had had one great adventure in his life; he had tracked a murderer to his lair, the murderer had shown fight, and after a desperate struggle in which a knife was used, he, James Delaney, had overcome him. Kate was greatly excited by this tale. She insisted on its being told to her twice over, and then cross-questioned James at length. How much blood was spilt? What was the nature of the knife used? Was it a carving knife or a bread knife? Had the villain a squint or was he pockmarked? Did his moustaches turn upwards like black wings? Did he welter in his gore?

The reply of the hero was of a long and interesting nature, and speaking with a manly bluntness he managed to convey to Kate his fearless indifference to danger. She had at first been a little contemptuous of him because he wore the

clothes of a civilian and did not show his colours, because of his narrow shoulders and poor physique, but his resource in the face of death caused her to withdraw her objections, and she began to admire this humble individual, who told his story so quietly, without any boastful expressions or exaggerated gestures. 131B might take a lesson from him she thought, and she eyed him tentatively. She was struck by the fact that for once in his life his tongue was not clacking, he was fingering his moustache and gazing ruminatively at Molly's neck, at least so it seemed; and Molly's eyes were cast down, her simple knot of hair at the back of her head cocking a little in the air. Kate was sorry Molly was so inattentive. Perhaps she had a headache, for there was a bright colour in her cheeks. Anyway it must be a dull evening for Tom. He, too, looked unwell; there was a kind of hot glare in his eyes that surprised Kate and made her feel a little anxious for him. It was a pity Molly did not make an effort to entertain him; she herself was far too interested in Mr. Delaney to be able to spare any time for Tom, and she continued her conversation with the former until he rose to go.

During the evening Molly felt confused and strangely excited. Why did 131B keep his eyes fixed upon her neck? Why was the simplest conversation beyond her powers? She asked herself these questions and felt anxious and disturbed when he drew nearer to her, breathing rather loudly as if from suspended emotion, and the answer became plain to her. As soon as Kate

closed the door behind her and went up the area steps in company with Mr. Delaney, she wanted very badly to fly from the kitchen, to fly from the possibility that answer suggested. But 131B was on his feet, standing beside her, and speaking in a halting whisper, and she had to give him all her attention.

"I — I'm after buying you a little brooch, Miss Mulquiney. Would you accept it from me?"

"I — I don't know. What would Kate say?"

"She'll say nothing. Don't tell her I gave it to you. It'll be a kind of secret between us. Look, now; it's called 'The Lucky Black Cat Brooch,' and the young man that sold it to me said 'it had Parisian diamond eyes and would bring luck to any one that wore it.' It's real bog oak, Miss Mulquiney; it's no sham."

All this was very embarrassing. Molly took the large black brooch with the shining bits of glass in it between her fingers and eyed it timidly as if it had some dangerous and explosive quality. She wondered if she ought to accept such a gift and at the same time she felt overwhelmed by the generosity of the great man. It had cost at least half-a-crown. Any one with an eye for bog oak could tell that from its size.

"Will you pin it on you?" he inquired awkwardly.

"Oh, it's too elegant for me, Mr. Casey!" she replied, and then her fingers closed tightly over it as he drew back quickly from her and they both turned their gaze towards the door where Kate was standing.

She came forward with a smile and pressed him to sit down again and stay with them a little longer; but he bade them both a brusque good-bye, and taking up his hat and cane marched out of the kitchen.

Kate felt annoyed with Molly for having failed to entertain him and annoyed with herself for having offended him. She was certain she had given offence, for it was not his habit to take himself off at such an early hour. She determined to be especially nice to him the next time he called and thus make up for her persistent neglect of his company.

A few days later an opportunity for such a reconciliation presented itself. Curiously enough 131B made his appearance on Tuesday evening, the one evening in the week she was sure to be going out. However, it was worth while sacrificing her free night if she could re-establish their friendship upon the old footing. She was the more anxious to do so because she had to a certain extent exhausted the possibilities of her other male acquaintances and had discovered that there was only one theme upon which Mr. James Delaney could converse. He was never tired of relating his tale of the capture of the murderer. Kate might talk about the War, the price of onions, literature in general, personal acquaintances, and the spraying of potatoes, he invariably replied with a description of his own clear-headed coolness in the "face of death." Conversation with him was therefore impossible.

131B had his little weaknesses, but at any rate

he could discuss any subject in the universe with ease and fluency. So Kate, desiring his companionship, spread out her nets for him again.

To her great astonishment she discovered he had never made the acquaintance of *Erin's Own*. This remarkable periodical describes itself as "a journal of fiction, literature and general information." It is better value than the best evening paper containing as it does "post-card stories," prize tales, anecdotes, sentimental poetry, racing tips, advice about cookery, the use of Condyl's fluid and the creation of jugged steak, several columns wholly devoted to fashion, gossip, gardening and chats with the doctor, useful information as to how to make ironing easy, short snappy articles about fish beef and the nature of glucose, storiettes, fiction suited to every class of reader, and last, but not least, a serial of a painfully exciting nature. All these themes were adequately dealt with in one number which cost twopence, and 131B had to admit that seven evening papers did not equal it in interest and in entertainment.

"There's a grand story that's been running through it a long while called 'Dicing with Death,'" said Kate; "it's all about an American heiress. Terry the Irishman and Kid Power the aeroplanist were cracked about her. She was snapped away by a black gang; they whipped her off to the country. But Kid Power was the tough fellow; they couldn't bet him. Her wicked uncle made holes in a boat and when she went out on the lake the boat began to sink, but Kid swooped down in his aeroplane and rescued her."



"That sounds good," 131B remarked reflectively. "I like to read about a chap that knows how to use them flying machines. I wonder now could I catch on to the story. You say it's been going a long while."

"Ah, sure, I can put you right about it, and I can give you a loan of the old numbers. There's only one bit I haven't got. Molly lit the fire with it in the morning. It was about Terry having dinner with the heiress in a hotel in New York. His coffee was drugged by a black waiter, and the black gang carried him off to a house in a back street where they wanted to drown him in a bath. Kid Power followed in a motor-car and got into the house, and he heard the water drawing and was in a terrible state for fear Terry would be drowned. He was in the room underneath, and he bored a hole through the ceiling by means of an awl and let the water run down that way. Then he put his head through the hole and covered the black gang with his revolver. And he leaped up through it, and bound one man and killed the other. And Belle was carried off to Lakelands by her wicked uncle, she was the heiress and he'd get her money if she married without his consent before she was twenty-one. Oh, there's a deal more that happened, but it's best for you to read it yourself."

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"I expect you've great experience. You must have broken some in your time, Kate."

"Well, I don't know about that. It's queer and easy, ma'am, to be breaking a man's heart. Sure, I never broke mine at all and never will."

"Of one thing you may be quite sure," said Mrs. Barry in the same light way, "you need never mind breaking a man's heart, for what there is of it is very easily mended."

"I suppose that's really so," was her listener's speculative reply.

"Of course it is. Oh, there's nothing in the world more easily mended," the other continued gaily, "so if you're not serious yourself you needn't have any qualms about sending him off at once. They tell me you can get sausages threepence a pound cheaper in Richmond Street. Wouldn't it be well to try there when you're out to-day?" It was Mrs. Barry's habit to leap abruptly from one subject into another. Sausages and human hearts she would heap together in the same breath, never attempting to sort them and deliver them in their own time and place. In the space of one quarter of an hour in the morning she had frequently discussed with her husband the shallow ugliness of imagist poetry, denounced the Food Controller to Kate, in company with a friend lavished praise on the poetic dramas of Mr. Yeats, made wise statements about the cooking of mutton-chops, criticised the opera company at the Gaiety Theatre, and having invented a whole new evening attire for a few shillings as she cleaned the stair rods, imparted it between each vigorous rub in

broken mutterings to Molly. Fresh thoughts and ideas winged their way through her mind like the rapid flight of birds. Indeed, in her active intelligence and quick grasp of her subject she greatly resembled Kate, requiring a crowd of acquaintances with whom she could discuss these swift travellers.

Quite inadvertently, with a few light words, she had helped to shape a destiny that morning. For discussion is not always born in Dublin — as is the common belief — merely to fly up the chimney and evaporate with the smoke. Kate's mind was made up. The words "You need never mind breaking a man's heart, for what there is of it is easily mended" had decided her. She had no doubt now as to the course of action it was necessary to take; it was all quite simple; it was strange it had not occurred to her before.

She must destroy this web of memories — throw them off her. They were sucking all the sweetness out of her life and coming between her and her work. She must never think of Droumavalla or Eugene again.

The letter required much writing and rewriting, and when, after two sleepless nights, it was finally composed and penned it scarcely covered a half sheet of paper.

DEAR EUGENE — It was good of you to write to me. But I never will change my mind, and I do not want to hear from you or see you again.

KATE.

This letter, once it was despatched, gave her great relief. She could put all her dark memories behind her now and take pleasure in the pleasant



life that stretched before her. And late one evening she believed she had done for ever with the past when the last red cinder of the fire devoured his poor scrap of writing.

## CHAPTER XII

ONE evening, on Kate's invitation, 131B dropped in for an hour or so, bringing with him his friend James Delaney, a plain-clothes detective. James had an unassuming appearance, a pale earnest face and the pleasing manners of a shop-walker in a rather select establishment. Kate monopolised him as she always quite unconsciously monopolised every fresh visitor to the kitchen. She was rewarded on this occasion by the personal reminiscences of the detective; he had had one great adventure in his life; he had tracked a murderer to his lair, the murderer had shown fight, and after a desperate struggle in which a knife was used, he, James Delaney, had overcome him. Kate was greatly excited by this tale. She insisted on its being told to her twice over, and then cross-questioned James at length. How much blood was spilt? What was the nature of the knife used? Was it a carving knife or a bread knife? Had the villain a squint or was he pockmarked? Did his moustaches turn upwards like black wings? Did he welter in his gore?

The reply of the hero was of a long and interesting nature, and speaking with a manly bluntness he managed to convey to Kate his fearless indifference to danger. She had at first been a little contemptuous of him because he wore the

clothes of a civilian and did not show his colours, because of his narrow shoulders and poor physique, but his resource in the face of death caused her to withdraw her objections, and she began to admire this humble individual, who told his story so quietly, without any boastful expressions or exaggerated gestures. 131B might take a lesson from him she thought, and she eyed him tentatively. She was struck by the fact that for once in his life his tongue was not clacking, he was fingering his moustache and gazing ruminatively at Molly's neck, at least so it seemed; and Molly's eyes were cast down, her simple knot of hair at the back of her head cocking a little in the air. Kate was sorry Molly was so inattentive. Perhaps she had a headache, for there was a bright colour in her cheeks. Anyway it must be a dull evening for Tom. He, too, looked unwell; there was a kind of hot glare in his eyes that surprised Kate and made her feel a little anxious for him. It was a pity Molly did not make an effort to entertain him; she herself was far too interested in Mr. Delaney to be able to spare any time for Tom, and she continued her conversation with the former until he rose to go.

During the evening Molly felt confused and strangely excited. Why did 131B keep his eyes fixed upon her neck? Why was the simplest conversation beyond her powers? She asked herself these questions and felt anxious and disturbed when he drew nearer to her, breathing rather loudly as if from suspended emotion, and the answer became plain to her. As soon as Kate

closed the door behind her and went up the area steps in company with Mr. Delaney, she wanted very badly to fly from the kitchen, to fly from the possibility that answer suggested. But 131B was on his feet, standing beside her, and speaking in a halting whisper, and she had to give him all her attention.

“ I — I’m after buying you a little brooch, Miss Mulquiney. Would you accept it from me? ”

“ I — I don’t know. What would Kate say? ”

“ She’ll say nothing. Don’t tell her I gave it to you. It’ll be a kind of secret between us. Look, now; it’s called ‘The Lucky Black Cat Brooch,’ and the young man that sold it to me said ‘it had Parisian diamond eyes and would bring luck to any one that wore it.’ It’s real bog oak, Miss Mulquiney; it’s no sham.”

All this was very embarrassing. Molly took the large black brooch with the shining bits of glass in it between her fingers and eyed it timidly as if it had some dangerous and explosive quality. She wondered if she ought to accept such a gift and at the same time she felt overwhelmed by the generosity of the great man. It had cost at least half-a-crown. Any one with an eye for bog oak could tell that from its size.

“ Will you pin it on you? ” he inquired awkwardly.

“ Oh, it’s too elegant for me, Mr. Casey! ” she replied, and then her fingers closed tightly over it as he drew back quickly from her and they both turned their gaze towards the door where Kate was standing.

She came forward with a smile and pressed him to sit down again and stay with them a little longer; but he bade them both a brusque good-bye, and taking up his hat and cane marched out of the kitchen.

Kate felt annoyed with Molly for having failed to entertain him and annoyed with herself for having offended him. She was certain she had given offence, for it was not his habit to take himself off at such an early hour. She determined to be especially nice to him the next time he called and thus make up for her persistent neglect of his company.

A few days later an opportunity for such a reconciliation presented itself. Curiously enough 131B made his appearance on Tuesday evening, the one evening in the week she was sure to be going out. However, it was worth while sacrificing her free night if she could re-establish their friendship upon the old footing. She was the more anxious to do so because she had to a certain extent exhausted the possibilities of her other male acquaintances and had discovered that there was only one theme upon which Mr. James Delaney could converse. He was never tired of relating his tale of the capture of the murderer. Kate might talk about the War, the price of onions, literature in general, personal acquaintances, and the spraying of potatoes, he invariably replied with a description of his own clear-headed coolness in the "face of death." Conversation with him was therefore impossible.

131B had his little weaknesses, but at any rate



he could discuss any subject in the universe with ease and fluency. So Kate, desiring his companionship, spread out her nets for him again.

To her great astonishment she discovered he had never made the acquaintance of *Erin's Own*. This remarkable periodical describes itself as "a journal of fiction, literature and general information." It is better value than the best evening paper containing as it does "post-card stories," prize tales, anecdotes, sentimental poetry, racing tips, advice about cookery, the use of Condyl's fluid and the creation of jugged steak, several columns wholly devoted to fashion, gossip, gardening and chats with the doctor, useful information as to how to make ironing easy, short snappy articles about fish beef and the nature of glucose, storiottes, fiction suited to every class of reader, and last, but not least, a serial of a painfully exciting nature. All these themes were adequately dealt with in one number which cost twopence, and 131B had to admit that seven evening papers did not equal it in interest and in entertainment.

"There's a grand story that's been running through it a long while called 'Dicing with Death,' " said Kate; "it's all about an American heiress. Terry the Irishman and Kid Power the aeroplanist were cracked about her. She was snapped away by a black gang; they whipped her off to the country. But Kid Power was the tough fellow; they couldn't bet him. Her wicked uncle made holes in a boat and when she went out on the lake the boat began to sink, but Kid swooped down in his aeroplane and rescued her."

"That sounds good," 131B remarked reflectively. "I like to read about a chap that knows how to use them flying machines. I wonder now could I catch on to the story. You say it's been going a long while."

"Ah, sure, I can put you right about it, and I can give you a loan of the old numbers. There's only one bit I haven't got. Molly lit the fire with it in the morning. It was about Terry having dinner with the heiress in a hotel in New York. His coffee was drugged by a black waiter, and the black gang carried him off to a house in a back street where they wanted to drown him in a bath. Kid Power followed in a motor-car and got into the house, and he heard the water drawing and was in a terrible state for fear Terry would be drowned. He was in the room underneath, and he bored a hole through the ceiling by means of an awl and let the water run down that way. Then he put his head through the hole and covered the black gang with his revolver. And he leaped up through it, and bound one man and killed the other. And Belle was carried off to Lakelands by her wicked uncle, she was the heiress and he'd get her money if she married without his consent before she was twenty-one. Oh, there's a deal more that happened, but it's best for you to read it yourself."

131B was mightily impressed by the amazing cleverness of Kid in boring a hole with an awl and making it wide enough for his body to pass through, and doing all this so quietly the black gang noticed nothing, though they were actually

standing on the floor that was pierced. This cunning and valorous deed had an especial appeal. 131B believed it was quite possible that he himself as a guardian of the law might have to deal with a black gang at some period of his life. It was well to know how to outwit them; and he made up his mind to study closely the methods of Kid Power. He was aware that Kate was waiting for some comment from him, and not wishing to show how deeply he had been moved by her tale, he remarked with a calmly detached air: " 'Dicing with Death' sounds good stuff. 'Tis a mighty long experience of criminals I have, and I can tell you it's very true to life. Now you have a notion of the kind of dangers myself and other members of the force are in every hour of the day. Indeed, the hand of the assassin, the pistol of the rogue would be always at our throats if they didn't know well the kind of men we are."

"Oh, faith, you're not to be trifled with," Kate admitted.

"That's the truth," replied 131B, accepting the compliment with a gracious wave of his hand, and handsomely acknowledging it in the fashion of the southern Irish by paying her one in return. "Your taste is very genteel, Kate. Indeed, I may say you've an eye for literature. And I give you my word the *Herald* would call 'Dicing with Death' real literature."

"It's real literature and no mistake," said Kate warmly. "I'm after reading a book called *Tess* by a chap named Hardy. The master lent it to me saying it was grand literature, and it

was good stuff right enough. But 't isn't up to 'Dicing with Death.' *Erin's Own* comes out on Friday, and I can tell you there were times I hardly lived from one Friday to the next. And when I bought it I wasn't five minutes reading the bit of the story that was in it. I might be out shopping in the evening and I'd buy it. And nothing would keep me from it. If my tea was poured out and waiting there before me I'd read it. Only a ring at the door would make me put it down."

131B again applauded this devotion to literature, and having said a few more words in praise of "Dicing with Death," proceeded to lay down the law with regard to criminals of all kinds and descriptions, instructing Kate in their methods, personal appearance, in the manner in which they ate their food, trimmed their nails, cut their hair, washed their teeth and so forth. He deplored the ignorance of the public, and denounced the State for not making a recognition of the various types, the swindler, the murderer and the thief, an integral part of the education of the infant at the National School. The drawing-room bell rang, the signal for the removal of the tea-tray, before he drew breath, dismissing the last few bullet-headed convicts he had known in a few fine phrases.

Molly took no part in this conversation. She was sitting at the table sewing, and as time went by and no notice was taken of her she began to feel aggrieved. She had taken particular pains with her hair that evening, and was wearing the

bog oak brooch which showed up to advantage against the whiteness of her neck. Yet Tom had not once turned his gaze in her direction; and this neglect sharpened her desire for even a little of the attention he had bestowed on her on former occasions. She wondered if Kate could be prevailed upon to wash up the tea-things; there were a number of visitors in the drawing-room, and it would take some little time, and would keep her conveniently occupied in the pantry. So when the bell rang, though it was her evening off, Molly civilly addressed her:

"I'm feeling very weakly in myself, Kate. There are queer aches in my legs. Will you wash up the tea-things just this once . . . ah, do . . . I'll not forget it to you. I'll wash up every other night this week."

Kate shook her head very decidedly, replying, "Sure I'm tired too. It's your turn, up with you now, and don't be keeping the mistress waiting."

"Just this once," Molly pleaded.

"It's your night for the tea," Kate inexorably retorted. "So hurry on now. There are visitors above."

Evidently there was no moving Kate, and 131B was far too interested in her conversation, or rather in his own ideas in connection with it and in their happy expression, to give a glance or a thought to the bog oak brooch and to Molly. She was to have no part nor lot in him to-night, that was plain; and having brought down the tray from the drawing-room, and washed up with a noisy clatter, she retired to bed, there to brood upon



the insatiable rapacity of Kate, who not content with the admiration and attentions of James Delaney the detective, Joe Spillane the sergeant, Henessy the shoemaker, Jerry Finny the cabman, Mr. Fagan the grocer's assistant, and sundry others, had annexed 131B again. There was of course a possibility of her relinquishing him. She was difficult to please and liked variety in her companions. But as the days went by it became apparent that she intended to retain for her own particular solace and entertainment the company of this handsome member of the force. Though he was inclined to be boastful he had, thanks to much study of the *Herald*, a great many more ideas than Kate's other acquaintances; and from the time she lent him *Erin's Own* he read it from cover to cover.

She sometimes borrowed books from Mr. Barry. She chose them herself; and at one time was reading *The Memoirs of Sarah Bernhardt*, at another *Dead Souls* by Gogol, and *Twenty-six Men and a Girl* by Gorky. She was attracted to the latter volume because of its alluring title, but she confided in 131B that its contents were a fraud and a delusion, and that "no chap" had a right to bestow such a remarkably interesting name on any book if he did not intend to treat the theme indicated by it instead of wandering off into unnatural obscurities. She had been a maid in a house in New York in which Sarah Bernhardt had stayed; and her *Memoirs*, as well as the other volumes, were subjects for much pleasant debate. Tom had not read them,

and yet was able to criticise them and talk about them in his large way, mingling with his observations many shrewd comments upon the universe in general.

He, in his turn, much appreciated Kate's ready mind and conversational powers, and now that she took an interest in him whenever he paid a visit to the kitchen, he devoted his whole time to her. She had some compelling power. If she wished to talk to him he had to go over to her and sit beside her, though he had not forgotten the bog oak brooch, and was perfectly aware of Molly's sombre and reproachful glances.

There were so many qualities in Kate that made her attractive. For one thing, she was a most reassuring person, and was in turn both wise and consoling when moments of depression seized him and he confided in her his fear that beef and Guinness' stout were doomed to extinction. She proved conclusively to him that though there might be a diminution in quality and in quantity, they would still be obtainable, and even if, through extraordinary circumstances, these articles of food and drink vanished off the face of the earth, mock beef and mock Guinness' stout would be sure to be discovered by some inventive soul. In order to allay his fears she went so far as to write to the Editor of *Erin's Own* about them, and he very courteously replied in the Advice to Readers column — proving beyond a doubt by fact and argument that beef would, at any rate for a long time to come, compose a portion of the diet of the D.M.P.

When the figures for the excess profits tax were published and Tom realised the colossal fortunes some people were making, he again became very low in himself. Kate, however, revived his drooping spirits with some philosophic reflections on the matter in question, explaining that these war millionaires were to be pitied rather than envied.

"There's one comfort about them," she would say; "when they've cheated the poor and made all their pile they'll have to die and leave it behind them. They think maybe they can buy a passage over with it. But they can only make a will; they can't take a penny with them. And you may be sure the millionaire, whoever he be, will get no thanks for it. What good is it to him when the people that are to get his money are looking down his neck to see when the last breath would go out of him?"

It was a real comfort for 131B to realise that there would be no flock of heirs hanging about his bedside anxiously watching out for the death rattle. It was not worth while cheating the poor with the prospect of such a deathbed and such an end in view. And his confidence in Kate's sound sense, his respect and admiration for her general character as well as his pleasure in her society increased mightily.

Molly, who had been frightened and ill at ease when he had paid her attentions, felt his neglect bitterly. Her feelings were wounded, and in her opinion Kate had not been quite fair to her. Yet

she could only grumble to herself in secret; she could not tax Kate openly with shabby behaviour, for 131B was, in a sense, the latter's property. Molly had been merely introduced to him and had not brought him to the house. She could not even make a grievance of this capture. So for some days her spirits were very drooping; she did her work listlessly and mournfully informed those about her that she could not support the stairs.

One evening, however, there was a change in her demeanour; even Kate noticed it, and in the week that followed Molly talked no more of her health and worked with a will.

She had a very precious secret, and for a little while kept it to herself. But the time came when it was necessary to share it with her companion, and it was with no little pride she at length made it known. She told Kate that she had been spending an evening in the house of an old employer and had met there a young man called Augustus Brookes, who was a valet in the service of the Honourable John Mountstreet. He had asked her to go out walking with him, and she had found him very genteel and most attentive.

"He's a grand little fellow," said Molly finally, "with a lovely little head. Oh, the prettiest little thing you ever set your eyes on, with a nice little split in his hair. He's like a lily."

"Butlers and valets are dangerous," was Kate's unenthusiastic response; "I knew them in America. Girls like them, they've so much talk. But they're either too hot or too heavy in what

they say. There's too much of the woman in them. Indeed they're worse than women; they make more mischief."

"You don't know Mr. Brookes," retorted Molly. "Oh, there's something very choice about him. Now there's nothing choice about 131B. He's as big and as heavy as a bull."

Kate did not, as was expected, contradict this aggressive statement. On the contrary, she admitted there was a slight resemblance, and argued that it was a compliment for any man to be likened to such a fine gamey animal. However, she still clung to her first assertion that valets were dangerous, though she graciously agreed to meet Augustus, be friendly and suspend judgment until such time as she knew him thoroughly.

The first meeting took place in the kitchen one Sunday evening, when he greeted Molly most affably and at once made himself at home by the fire as if he was an old acquaintance. Kate was certainly not prepossessed by his appearance. He was such a little man and had such a distressingly weak moustache and fair hair, much oiled and greased. His complexion was a curious saffron shade, and altogether he looked got up and artificial, with his lavender-coloured socks and tie, his kid gloves, his waisted grey topcoat and black velvet collar, and his rather overwhelming manners.

When he spoke his voice was a mixture of shrill cockney and flat Dublin sounds that seemed to Molly very genteel. He was not at a loss for conversation, rarely taking any notice of remarks



made to him, keeping up a steady recitative, and sitting there like a little king upon his throne. It was not long before he began to discourse the ladies upon his wardrobe, calling attention to the perfect harmony of his socks and tie, the beautiful line of his topcoat, and describing almost in the same breath the various suits and the quality and texture of underwear belonging to earls and rich commoners he had valeted or with whose valets he was acquainted. He then enumerated again for Molly's particular benefit the number and the price of his suits, socks, ties and shirts, saying finally:

"Oh, a fellow's got to be smart when he moves in high life. I've got to look after my appearance if I want to keep in the swim. And, my eye, it takes some doing. But I ask any salary I please, and I get it. Why, I'd half-a-dozen aristocrats trying to hook me when I gave notice to Lord Body. That was my last place."

"Half-a-dozen!" exclaimed Molly admiringly.

"Yes, half-a-dozen, and there would have been more if they'd heard of my leaving. I'm looked on as a bit of a catch, you know. Between you and me, I might have been valet to his Ex., but I've a modest and retiring nature. I like quiet. That place would have been too showy by a long chalk."

"Ah, sure, the Lord Lieutenant would want a bigger man than you," said Kate a little contemptuously.

"You don't know him," returned Augustus.

"His Ex. has a great regard for me; said to me

once — in confidence of course — that he wished he could exchange and get me as his man. But I wasn't having any."

"I don't believe you," was Kate's curt response, and she promptly turned her back on the valet who had resisted his Ex. and busied herself with the range.

It was an awkward moment. Molly, though far less muscular than Kate and of a naturally timorous nature, became possessed of a painful desire to hit her or to do her some bodily hurt for behaving so rudely when she had promised to be agreeable. However, Augustus showed great tact; he took no notice of the aggressive remark, and proceeded to converse in low tones that were quite inaudible to any one a few yards away and necessitated Molly's sitting right beside him in order that she might hear him. He told her of his early life and gave her an account of his race and name. His father was a Londoner and his mother came from Dublin; he had from the first been valued for his services; he had frequently travelled abroad, always moving with the cream of the aristocracy. It was like a fairy tale, with all the charm of a possible reality, and Molly marvelled at his condescension in noticing her humble self. Finally he asked her to sing, but when he learnt that her repertoire consisted of Moore's melodies and traditional airs, he pronounced them old-fashioned and suggested that she should occasionally go to a music-hall and pick up some of the up-to-date songs sung there. He then informed her that he had a sweet tenor voice,

and offered to illustrate what he meant by up-to-date songs — teach her, in short, what real melody was like. She begged him, of course, to do so, and the greater part of what remained of the evening was passed in the making of music, his twangy shred of a voice piping with nasal shrillness through the kitchen. Not only the beauty and value of new-fashioned but old-fashioned music-hall ditties were made plain to her in this manner, and Augustus completed his programme by singing “The Only Girl” as he gazed romantically at his hostess.

She again became conscious of that queer uneasy feeling that had troubled her when she was sitting on the bench with 131B in Herbert Park. But it did not stay with her long this time, for she was not afraid, as was nearly always the case, when she was with the large policeman. Augustus was so small and had such charming manners and talked volubly in a way that she could understand. She felt quite at ease with him. A few minutes before his departure he tactfully approached Kate again, asking her for information about the prices of women’s clothes, the materials used and so forth, comparing them with the prices current for suits, socks and shirts. It was a vast and interesting theme, and Kate became quite talkative, and when he rose to go bade him a pleasant good-bye, inviting him to come again.

Molly saw Augustus fairly frequently in the days that followed, and his companionship became increasingly delightful. He confided in her that his great ambition was to become the manager of

a big hotel. For then he could wear evening clothes and boiled shirts even in day-time and boss hall porters six foot high and lift-boys twice his size. So kind and pleasant was he she reciprocated his confidences by telling him of her own ambitions. She longed to possess a little house that would be situated in some genteel suburb like Rathmines, and would not be far from a tram line. The great drawback to service was the absence of possession. One lived in the house of a stranger, one ate with somebody else's knife and fork, one slept in some one else's bed, drank from alien cups, and had meals at other people's tables. It was an ignominious position for any woman not to own a frying-pan or even the kettle that boiled the water for her tea; they were as necessary to her existence as a razor, a pipe and a capacity for using his fists were to a man. Without them she was without dignity and little better than a pauper or a rag-picker.

Augustus admitted that the kettle and the frying-pan were a woman's birthright and her natural weapons of offence and defence when a pugnacious husband required taming. He pointed out, however, that far better than any little house in Rathmines would be the position of manageress of a big hotel. There, mistress of many pots and pans, a woman would hold sway over hundreds of lives, and her dignity, if she bowed her will to her husband in all matters that were seemly, that is to say, in matters not pertaining to the kitchen, would be thereby much exalted.

"I'd like well to be manageress of a big hotel,

and I know 'tis the only work suited to me," remarked Molly with a sigh. "But 'twill never be. Indeed 'twould be like dying and going to Heaven to be manageress of — of, say, the Shelbourne Hotel."

"Oh, you never know your luck," Augustus replied, and, winking knowingly, went on — "wait and see, wait and see."

For a few minutes Molly gazed at the little man rapturously — almost as if he were some deity, or, at any rate, a being gifted with supernatural powers. And feeling confident that some day this hotel would be conjured up for her she went on to tell him, as she would have told any omnipotent being in the form of prayer, the wish of her heart, a wish that she believed could not possibly be satisfied.

From her earliest years she had longed to possess a gold watch. She had never been able to save enough money to buy one; she believed that she would go to her grave without ever having had the supreme joy of possessing such a treasure, and the thought of what she was missing made her at times very unhappy.

Two days after this confidence was made Augustus presented her with a jeweller's box. On opening it and perceiving its contents she became overwhelmed with shyness, and emotion completely robbed her of her voice. There was her dream nestling in all its bright perfection in downy cotton wool; there was the treasure that she believed could never be hers in this life. Gold watches are amazingly various in shape and gen-



eral appearance as Molly knew to her cost, having spent many vain hours gazing at jewellers' shop windows, but this was exactly the one she would have chosen; it fulfilled all her requirements. Size was important, and it was as large as a five-shilling piece and shone like a mirror in the sun. She did not tell Kate about it, but kept it packed away in cotton wool during the week, secretly gazing at it whenever she had a moment of leisure. It was only wound and worn on Sundays, and even then it never occurred to her to look at its face for the time; she looked only for the beautiful glitter of the rim, for the twisted gold of the bracelet against the background of white wrist, and what she saw satisfied all her longings.

There was some deep meaning in this gift; Molly was quite aware of its significance and felt that the time had come for discussion and inquiry. Believing the answer would be a favourable one she asked Kate point-blank what she thought of Augustus.

"The first time I saw him I thought he looked as if he was just weaned," was the severe reply. "Indeed, I didn't think him a man at all."

"He's very young-looking," admitted Molly. "But isn't he like a lark with his singing, his pretty voice and pretty ways?"

"He's like a tormenting monkey," retorted Kate; "he's like some irritable little puppy that'd be hanging on to your tail. He never leaves you alone. The nights he comes seem to me the length of a lifetime."

"It's all because of his size you're turning him down."

"Well, the bigger a man is the quieter he is. The smaller they are the bigger opinion they have of themselves. Take an advice from me, Molly. Don't be encouraging him."

"And why wouldn't I encourage him?"

"He'd make a poor kind of a husband," Kate blurted out, and then, hesitating a moment, went on, "Isn't he only up to your shoulder? Sure it'd be the dickens to be looking down at a small man."

"I like smart little men. You can keep them in their place. There's nothing frightening about them. They're pleasant and easy-going."

"There's your mistake. Big men are quiet and tender-hearted. Little men have twice the temper and are as cross as two sticks. The smaller they are the more talk they have."

Molly was too put out to reply. She attached great value to Kate's opinion; her experience was wide; she knew men's ways so well and was always very successful in attracting them to her. Evidently she did not approve of Augustus, and she appeared not to wish to give the reason for her disapproval. It was scarcely fair to hide it up and merely to hint that he was not a desirable person and should not be encouraged. Molly was about to tax her with this mystery-making when Madame Cooney appeared in the doorway.

Her appearance was a little more woebegone than usual. Her wispy grey hair, gathered under

a shabby black bonnet, left the forehead very bare, and harshened the outline of her bony face, while her lips seemed more sunken and querulous than ever and her chin more prominent. She sank heavily into a chair and Molly hastened to pour her out a cup of tea. If she were not presented with one at once it would be a cause of offence, and she would rise with a dolorous whine announcing that it was quite plain that she was not wanted, that she was not welcome because she was poor.

"Wouldn't you take a cup of warm tea now, Mary Anne?" said her cousin, handing her a large well-filled mug, "'twill lift you up from the earth."

"Ay, indeed, I want some lifting up from the earth. Times are very bad. The Almighty seemly has forgotten the poor."

"What's happened now?" inquired Kate brusquely.

"It's my teeth. I was tormented with pains and aches in every one of them for two weeks and more. And last Friday I went to the hospital and showed them to the young man there. 'They're as bad as bad can be,' says he. 'I'll have to pull every one of the twenty-two out.'"

"You wouldn't let him do that on you, Mary Anne? Sure you'd look a holy show," remonstrated Molly.

"I can tell you I had a lump in me swally when I heard him say it. So I just asked him to saw off all the tops of me teeth and give me a tidy mouth.

But not a bit of it. He wants to pull every one out."

"I'm not surprised," murmured Kate speculatively. "I don't know one person who has a decent tooth in their head except 131B. And, mind you, they're all his own. Other people's teeth is rotten — even Molly's there. Though they're white enough she breaks them on her food."

"I'll have to get in a new set," wailed Madame Cooney, "and where's the money to come from? 'Twill cost a fortune."

"Is it teeth that are not your own?" cried Kate. "Oh, indeed, I'd rather have no teeth than teeth that clank together and jog up and down."

"Then what will I do for ating?"

Molly, realising that Mary Anne was about to break out into lamentations of a lengthy and painful nature, here interrupted her, saying:

"You'll get in a fine new set of white teeth and 'twill make a beauty of you."

"Ah, but the cost of it. 'Twill mean pounds and pounds."

"You can sell false teeth on the quays. I've seen the advertisement — 'Old gold, silver and false teeth bought. Highest cash price given.' So 'twon't be spending money but keeping it to get in a set. Sure, your mouth'll be like a savings bank and safer than the post office, what's more. If you died itself your children would come in for them."

"Ah, don't talk to me of dying. I feel like as if I was on the edge of the grave this minute."

"Indeed you may count yourself very well off," retorted Kate, looking severely across the table at Madame Cooney. "There's no dentist at all down in our parts in County Cork. But a man would come round once a fortnight, and if you wanted teeth, took the mould of your mouth and the next fortnight brought the teeth back. There was no satisfaction at all in them because they never fitted. My Aunt Maggie put them in for show on a Sunday, but she never ate with them. Oh, indeed, you're well off up here. Them young fellows at the hospital have great cleverality."

"Well off, is it? I was never worse off. 'Tisn't my teeth alone that are at me. That young man, the new lodger, is at me tooth and nails as well."

"That young man!" interjected Molly. "Sure, he seemed to me a decent poor fellow — very quiet in himself."

"Oh, quiet enough. It's the trickery of him, the indecency of him that beats me. I let him the room you were in, Kate. And look now at the advertisement he put in the *Herald* a week back." Madame Cooney drew a dirty newspaper from under her cloak, and after some elegant sniffing and dexterous manipulation of her forefinger along her nostrils proceeded to read in firm but tragic tones: "To let to quiet humble man half a bed at one-and-six per week. To let to quiet humble man half a bed at one-and-six per week."<sup>1</sup> The repetition of the sentence seemed

<sup>1</sup> The above advertisement actually did appear in this form in a Dublin newspaper.



to relieve her feelings, and putting down the newspaper she continued, "There were three answers; and he's just after taking a coal-heaver into the one bed with him. I can't turn him out; I'd lose the rent. Oh, what will I do at all and I a deserted widow, the mother of four!"

"My, my, that's what the papers call profiteering," remarked Kate.

"But he hasn't bet me out yet," returned Madame Cooney defiantly. "I've withdrawn the bedclothes."

Kate, having applauded this action, proceeded to soliloquise upon the idiosyncrasies of men in general, suggesting that the female would never have ingenuity enough to contrive such a plan for making money, and that a young man of such resource was bound to get on in life and should not be ejected from his room but encouraged, for some day he might pay court to one of the Misses Cooney. Madame Cooney tried to remonstrate, tried to impress her listeners with the blue blood of the Cooneys, who had always been clerks and typists so far and had never descended to service; but it was in vain. Her feeble voice was drowned by Kate's stronger instrument as she discoursed upon men who were stout and little, men who were long and lean, men who in length outrivalled lamp-posts, men who if laid on their fronts from very stoutness were as tall as if they stood up, and the temperaments that went with these various figures, the characteristics that were sure to go with outline and presence, and this led her on to what was in her mind, to the theme of Augustus.

Augustus was new to Madame Cooney, and at length her querulous whine died down and she consented to listen.

"Did you ever see a little Bantam cock — the way he'd flaunt his feathers, shake his tail and clap his wings?" inquired Kate. "That's Augustus . . . and run when a big cock comes along."

"Ah, don't mind her," put in Molly. "Oh, Mary Anne, if you seen the little face of him and the little feet you'd doate on him. And he's so pleasant-spoken —"

"Sure he'd want six men to keep him in talk," interrupted Kate. "He's overflowing with talk about his tailor-made coat, his coloured socks, his kid gloves. He drew back his shirt to show Molly his new vests. Did you ever see an overflowing bucket of water? That's what his talk is like. Oh, Molly's too soft with the men, she's afraid of a whole man, she wouldn't go near him, she likes them womanish."

A gush of furious tears choked the latter's "swally," so that she could not articulate a reply. But Madame Cooney, who had been knotting her bonnet string preparatory to departure, wailed a response as she turned towards the door:

"Molly's too soft, and you're too hard, and both of ye will have an unhappy end. Of that I'm sure."

A disappointing silence followed this pronouncement, and the Mother of Four, finding she could not start a quarrel, departed grumbling from the kitchen.

"That old woman would plague the life out of

you," muttered Kate, as she cleared away the tea-things.

There was no reply to this remark. Molly sat with her hands clasped under her apron across her stomach, rocking herself to and fro. The attitude was a significant one, for it was always adopted when the patient was unwell or mentally afflicted. Kate moved quickly towards the scullery with the tray, feeling she might be in for nerves if she stayed. She was, however, summoned back by a voice whose irritable tones commanded obedience.

"Kate, I want to speak to you."

"Well, what is it?"

"Why are you so down on poor little Augustus?"

"I don't know. I don't like small men. And I could blow Augustus off my hand."

"You've something against him," Molly broke out wrathfully, "and it's not fair to be hiding it up; it's not fair to be abusing him, and never giving out the reason for it."

"Well, if you want the reason it's this," Kate replied shortly. "I don't trust him. From the day I laid eyes on him I didn't trust him. I think there's no meanness he wouldn't stoop to. There's my opinion of him now."

"You've no right to blackguard him like that," cried Molly. "He's worth twenty Tom Caseys. And it's the way you're jealous. That's what it is. Now, of all the abominable, horrid men, Tom is the worst. If you came into the room he'd shove away from you like a bull going to fight. He's all treachery and lies and deceit."

Molly was clearly not in a condition to be laid upon the kitchen table and tickled. The matter was serious when the quarrel was about a man. Kate promptly retreated into the scullery, and closed the door behind her.

Further abuse followed, and broken fragments of sentences now and then reached the latter's ears as she washed up the tea-things. In about a quarter of an hour's time the upbraiding ceased and quiet prevailed.

Later in the evening, when Kate hoped the storm was overpast, and ventured to emerge from the scullery, she discovered Molly still seated in the same attitude, her two hands clasped beneath her apron across her stomach, sadly rocking herself to and fro.

## CHAPTER XIII

### I

MOLLY had not spoken to Kate for two days — a calamitous fact without parallel in the history of their friendship. This was the sequel to her decision to pursue the acquaintance of Augustus with all the energy of which she was capable. He certainly seemed eager for her companionship, and suggested that they should spend an evening at the cinema. "Gossamer Wings" was running at the Carleton, and it would suit them admirably.

Molly accepted the invitation, and they were sitting before the fire chatting, as they had half an hour to spare before they need start, when who should walk into the kitchen but 131B. There was an awkward moment of silence; then Molly introduced the two men and summoned Kate from the pantry.

The opportunity for speech was too good a one to be lost. 131B was in one of his silent melancholy humours, and Augustus proceeded therefore to harangue the company. He talked of the cut of a man's trousers, and having rather pointedly eyed the ill-cut pair upon 131B, and asked him if they had been made in the last century, they were so shapeless, he enunciated the dictum that a coat with a waist, a fancy waistcoat, well-cut trousers, patent leather boots, coloured socks and kid gloves always stamped a gentleman. The



man who did not possess such articles of clothing was a boor — a clod belonging to the scum of the city, and no better than any dirty corner boy, with whom alone he should associate. Again Augustus gazed hard at 131B's trousers, his sober grey socks, his heavy iron-shod boots, until at length the latter began to scowl and moved his enormous feet uneasily. This seemed to give satisfaction to the discursive little man, who went on to say that scent and hair-wash were very necessary in the composition and make-up of a gentleman. Face-creams were also useful on occasions, especially to those of bright and lobster-coloured countenances. Whereupon the speaker stared at 131B's ruddy face, and suggested to him politely that Woolworth's face-cream and hair-oil — creams sixpence a jar, hair-oil also sixpence — should play an essential part in his toilet, announcing in the same breath that a man who did not use the properties of the toilette he had already mentioned was without cleanly habits, a bounder, a cad and no gentleman.

131B reared his head in majestic fashion, snorted and sniffed the air.

"I have no opinion of a fellow who has the filthy smell of scent on him," he growled, "and uses mucky face-creams. Why, he's no better than a womanish girl with long hair."

"Much worse," interpolated Kate.

"Ay, indeed, much worse."

"Oh, I admit a great fat lubber like you is much too beastly to use them," exclaimed Augustus. "What decency could any one expect from

a chap with a face on him like a boiled cabbage, and clothes that might have come out of a corporation bucket, they're so greasy."

131B rose silently and crossed the kitchen, pausing in front of Augustus and rubbing his hands together in an unpleasantly significant manner. Then, moistening his lips with his tongue, he began: "Look here, young man, I could settle your hash for you in a minute. I could break you across my knee with the turn of a hand; I could squeeze the life out of you between a finger and thumb."

"You wouldn't dare," blurted out Augustus, paling beneath his saffron complexion.

"Oh, wouldn't I! Anyway I could make you feel me. I could sit on you for a minute or two and what would be left, I wonder? A fine squashy mash, ha? Oh, I could crush you and squeeze you, you little hopping flea of a man. . . . Here, look sharp and be off out of this before I murder you."

Augustus blinked in a half-dazed manner for one moment, measuring the huge girth and dimensions of the policeman and his own puny proportions; then, with a desperate clutch at his topcoat, stick and hat he hurriedly slunk from the kitchen.

Molly, who followed him, was furious at the cruel treatment of her little pet and apostrophised 131B as a bully and a brute all the way down town. Her companion, on the other hand, was merely inclined to be tearful and peevish, all the boastfulness gone from him, but once the lights of

O'Connell's Bridge were in view his spirits rose again.

They decided to take a turn before going into the cinema, and so they joined the crowds in O'Connell Street, strolling up and down, now and then pausing to gaze at the brightly lit windows of tobacconists' and newspaper vendors' booths that had been run up in the place of shops after the rebellion. Having discussed the contents of the windows and the manner in which girls should do their hair, a theme upon which Augustus was both suggestive and interesting, they directed their steps towards the cinema, and then it was that Molly's companion began to confide in her about himself. A mottled skin was a great drawback to a valet. He had had great trouble with his complexion. But the problem had at last been successfully solved, and he showed her an advertisement which read as follows: "A slightly sun-burnt complexion greatly enhances a young man's beauty. Try sun bronze." Augustus had tried sun bronze, and he flattered himself that a very manly shade of colouring had been produced. In fact "sun bronze" had put an end to his troubles.

Molly was much touched by this confidence, by the frank way in which it was made. Few men would have had enough courage to share with another, more particularly a woman, such intimate secrets of the toilette. She sympathised deeply; she herself had been troubled once by pimples, and the anxiety she had suffered at that period of her life was extreme.

A cinema has many advantages over other

places of entertainment. Not alone is it a pleasant spot for an afternoon nap when the streets are thick with mud and the rain falls with heavy persistency, but it is also a happy harbour for those couples who, tired of aimless strolling, desire some dusky place of rest where the dimness gives an opportunity for greater intimacy. Augustus knew of its large possibilities in this respect, and Molly became aware of them before the evening was past. There comes a voiceless period in friendship when swift furtive action is desirable; where can it better be taken than in the cinema where silence reigns and the lights are low?

The pictures flitted by in quick, endless procession, but their story was only a background for the real one. Molly sat up very stiffly. She did not dare to lean back, for it would admit recognition of the fact that his arm was behind her. Of course it was very wrong to permit an arm to lie in that particular position. Her mother had often told her that a girl should only allow her husband to utilise his arm in that particular fashion. But it would be so cruel to tell Augustus to remove it. In fact, it was an impossibility when, in his lordly generosity, he had presented her with a gold watch. No measurable return could ever be made for such a princely gift. So her best plan was to take no notice of his present action.

Curiously enough the theme of "Gossamer Wings" dealt principally with couples sitting under hedges or in conservatories and boudoirs, the young men's right arms in the same awkward position while slow music was played. They

made the attitude of Augustus seem quite natural and appropriate. Gradually Molly became dreamy and abstracted, and wondered vaguely if the real world outside the kitchen, with its dull dry work, was made up of couples resting in the dusk, encircling arms and tender melody. If so it was a delicious world, the only possible world in which to live. She wanted very badly to let herself go, to lean back, to come into contact with that comforting arm, to surrender herself completely and enter into the paradise that was passing swiftly before her eyes. Her pleasure became intense at the thought that one little movement of hers would enable her to pass into such bliss.

The heroine in "Gossamer Wings" had been captured for the third time by brigands. Her lover had found her in the heart of the mountains; and though in the midst of deadly perils they had halted in a rocky gorge merely in order that they might sit side by side, just above a precipice over which any brigand could topple them. The orchestra wailed out the tender cry of their love, and the arm of the hero slid round the small waist as he gazed at his lady adoringly. Then there came a burst of passionate melody, violin sobbing, 'cello booming, and Molly let herself slip back with a happy sigh, closing her eyes.

She felt a grip about her waist and greasy hair brushing her cheek. It made her start to her feet gasping as if she had suddenly plunged into ice-cold water. He was whispering something; an angry woman, sitting in the row behind, began to



grumble; he pulled peremptorily at her dress, but she took no notice and struggled out of the row.

It was drizzling outside; the streets were sloppy, the lights hazy and the pavements empty. They walked back in silence to Hatch Street, Molly confused and rather miserable, acutely conscious of the fact that her best hat was being spoiled by the wet, and that her hair had gone out of curl. At the area gate he broke the terrible silence, and at the sound of his voice her brain cleared; she was able to think connectedly again.

"Will you forgive me, Miss Mulquiney?" he began; "I meant to take no liberty — only I lost my head. But you'd make any chap lose his head."

Molly's eyelids drooped before his gaze. He was in a dignified position; she was two steps down from the gate, so his eyes were on a level with hers. Their soulful expression, and the fact that he had lost his head, were enough to move the stoniest heart. Relentless anger was impossible in such a case.

"Of course, you'd no right to do it," she replied in a soft quaver; "but I — I'll forgive you if you'll have conduct and not be doing it again."

"Not without your leave," he returned significantly. "Good-bye, Miss Mulquiney. I'll call in on Wednesday night. I'll have a question to ask you and perhaps another present. So keep the coast clear."

His condescension was beautiful. Molly was overwhelmed by it, and by the prospect of that mysterious question. Her heart gave a mad

thump, and careless of the rain and wind, careless of her best Sunday hat and the ruined glories of her ostrich feather, she stood by the area gate ecstatically gazing down the street at the little figure picking its way with dainty steps among the pools, growing smaller and smaller until at length it disappeared round the corner into the square.

## II

The following afternoon Kate was ironing in the kitchen, and as she ironed her mind was busy seeking for some means whereby she could bring Molly into a state of grace. There was one insuperable difficulty. She was determined to have no traffic with Augustus, and she feared that he was paying Molly far more attention than was desirable. Her head was being turned; she would not listen to reason; she refused to answer when spoken to; there could be no peace in the kitchen as long as this little hopping flea of a man was around. He was a bad, unwholesome influence. If necessary, the place must be made too hot to hold him. Just as Kate arrived at this conclusion there was a knock at the area door, and in walked Augustus.

"Where's Molly?" he inquired.

"She's busy upstairs and won't be down for hours and hours," was the chill reply.

"Oh, I can wait for her," he said, and quite unabashed by Kate's frigid stare, put down his coat and hat and settled himself into a chair by the fire. Hating to be in the company of any

individual who did not admire him, or was in any way hostile or contemptuous of him, he at once proceeded to pay compliments and to make pleasant conversation about the War, the weather, the shops, and his sensations on a sea journey. For some little while his tongue ran on, but the cool disdain of Kate's manner, her refusal to recognise his presence in the kitchen, either by word or sign, at length stung even his self-complacency. He began to make remarks about the D.M.P. of an unflattering nature. "By Jove, I could take the shine out of those chaps!" he exclaimed, "great, big, common fellows. There's that great mug of a policeman who was here the other evening. What good is he? He's no use to any one — all beef and no brain. He couldn't run away even. He's only stuck up in the street to be potted at by Sinn Feiners and the soldiers."

Kate slapped down her iron and addressed Augustus in quick, peremptory tones: "Here, you walk out of my kitchen, d'ye hear?"

"Walk out of the kitchen!"

"Yes, walk out of my kitchen."

"But I want to see Molly."

"Here, cut your sticks out of this. I won't have my friends talked of in that way and by a rascal that looks no better than a ha'pworth of soap after a week's washing — by a creature overflowing with low villainy. Oh, if there was any law in the land you'd have been clapped into jail long ago. That's what 131B says. Now, I've given you your marching orders. Let you get out of this at once or I'll make you sorry you ever

were born." Kate brandished the iron menacingly.

For the second time that week Augustus beat a hasty retreat to the area door. Just as he reached it his name was called in anxious tones, and Molly who, unperceived by Kate, had been standing in the other doorway, precipitated herself across the kitchen. Augustus, however, was in far too great a hurry to pause or to answer this summons, and he disappeared up the area steps, Molly closely following him.

A few minutes later she returned without him and sank into a chair in a state bordering on hysteria. Between sobs and cries of rage she apostrophised Kate in broken meaningless sentences, from which the latter gleaned the fact, after much patient listening, that Augustus had vowed he would never return, never honour the kitchen with another visit, never see Molly again. He had been too grossly insulted.

This threat, as the days passed, proved not to be the utterance of mere hasty anger, but to be rooted in deep resolve. Molly passed a portion of each evening on the area steps watching anxiously for the reappearance of the little figure, and every morning she rushed to answer the postman's knock. Her vigilance was all in vain; no word or sign came, and soon she realised she must give up the fair hope that had almost seemed to her a concrete fact, that some day she would be the wife of the manager of the Shelbourne Hotel. The disappointment that followed the loss of this

prospective kingdom was of a very bitter kind, and the breach between her and Kate became wide indeed. They only spoke when it was absolutely necessary to give each other directions about work, and silence was the rule in the kitchen. Yet Molly was possessed of a painful craving for conversation; she had never wanted to talk so much before; she felt she could keep up a continuous flow of speech the whole day through, and even then not be satisfied. So, whenever possible, she sought the company of Madame Cooney, whose taciturn gloom, whose continual assurance to Molly that she should have died young, died before wicked scheming had blighted her life, was both consoling and comforting.

"Sure, I've no chance with Kate," complained the victim for the hundredth time one night. "There's a boy by the name of Casey out of the D.M.P., who came to the kitchen one night — a fine, tall, handsome fellow. He liked me very well, I know, but when Kate saw the way the wind blew she sent me to wash up the tea-things, and from that time on I didn't get in a word with him. Oh, Kate gets inside of a fellow, and doesn't give me a chance. She takes everyone's share, and if she can't take it she'll drive it away. I never knew such a girl for grabbing. Long ago I'd been married, and well married, but for her."

Here Molly had to pause in order to wrestle with a choke in her throat, and Madame Cooney seized the opportunity, this sudden cessation of



speech presented, by solemnly spreading out a newspaper on the table and making the following mysterious pronouncement:

"You've a right to be thankful to God you're not lying in jail this very minute. Indeed, it's a miracle you escaped it."

"Escaped jail! What do you mean?" cried Molly, staring at her cousin with bright, startled eyes.

"Your friend Augustus was arrested to-day for making off with one hundred pounds that he stole from his master. It's here on the paper. If they'd cot the two of ye together they'd have clapped ye both into jail, and the Cooneys would have been branded by the crime of the Mulquineys and been disgraced for ever."

"But I didn't know anything about it," gasped Molly.

"Ah, that wouldn't matter. They'd have clapped you into prison for being friendly with a common thief. That's the law."

Molly was too dumbfounded to question this statement, or even to articulate any coherent sound. She clasped her hands across the seat of her affections and rocked herself to and fro, while Madame Cooney spent a happy hour complaining and grieving over the low company her cousin kept, and hinting darkly that it was possible she might yet be picking oakum and doing six months' hard.

When at length the latter had recovered her wits and the use of her legs she rose, and bidding Madame Cooney a hasty good-bye, fled from the musty parlour and hurried through the streets

with a frightened, beating heart, expecting plain-clothes detectives to leap out at her from every dark corner. Open spaces had even more terrors for her. There, in College Green, stood Joe Spillane directing the traffic, looking even more gigantic than usual in the gathering dusk. She feared she might catch his eye, and that, connecting her at once with Augustus, he would cross the road and lay a heavy hand upon her shoulder. There could be no escape from that huge hand once it settled into that particularly awkward position, and not daring to look again at the large figure she began running in the direction of Grafton Street, expecting every moment to hear heavy footfalls behind her.

In her hurried flight she was nearly knocked down several times through violent collisions with individuals of solid and portly girth; twice she barely escaped being run over by a passing tram, while a barking dog ran beside her trying to bite her legs. When she arrived at Hatch Street so prostrate was her condition it was a full hour and more before Kate learnt the reason for her distress, learnt of the infamy of Augustus, learnt that policemen were on her track. It was a situation fraught with extreme peril, and Molly decided to spend the night in the coal-hole or under her bed. She did not look further than the night — dared not let her thoughts dwell on the dangerous days that must follow. Kate burst into a fit of unfeeling laughter when the project of the coal-hole was unfolded, then, having assured Molly there was no danger, promised to speak to 131B and

obtain his protection for her, and, if necessary, get him to use his influence with the police inspector to prevent her arrest.

Molly, in return, vowed she would black Kate's boots until she died, put her into her grave-clothes when that time came, during her life-time, if occasion required, walk on her knees for her from Hatch Street to Stephen's Green, and perform various other useful acts of service to prove her devotion. Thus, a pleasant feeling of self-sacrifice filled their hearts, making each of them feel their own unselfishness acutely. This feeling is of an eminently satisfactory nature, inasmuch as it gives birth to a very real tenderness for the author of these pleasurable sensations, for the individual for whom sacrifice is to be made. Consequently, a complete reconciliation followed; and as a proof of their warm regard for each other Molly and Kate spent a disturbed and uncomfortable night, sleeping together in the one bed.

Life became very pleasant again. Molly was only too thankful to be safe from the clutches of the law, and as long as Kate had influence with its officials she felt quite secure — felt that there was not even danger of her being brought to the courts as a witness, in which case that awful episode in the cinema would assuredly have been brought to light, perhaps even published in the newspaper, and placed side by side with the War news, and would, in her opinion, have even eclipsed it in sensational horror.

The day the trial was over and Augustus convicted of more than one larceny Molly felt safe

at last, and was so happy and relieved it seemed to her she could never again be miserable. She was therefore vastly surprised when she found Kate sitting in an attitude of despair in the kitchen, her eyes quite red and her hair in disorder, as if she had been clutching at it violently.

"Oh, Kate, what's the matter?" she cried out, and struck by the look of desolation on her friend's face, continued anxiously, "has any one died on you?"

"Not a one. But the news is bad enough," was the mournful response. "I'm off to the States as soon as I can clear out of this."

"Off to the States? And why would you do that?"

"I can get no sweetening for my tea. There's not a grain of sugar in the city of Dublin. I'm after trying six shops. They say there'll be no more till the War is over. Isn't that enough to drive any one across the sea?"

The news shocked Molly terribly; she did not care particularly for sugar, but its withdrawal from the market as an article of diet was a menace. Curling-pins might go next. In a year's time paper clothes might be the rule, and garments made of old newspapers were not a pleasant prospect. For the moment Molly realised that tea without sweetening was, in Kate's case, a calamity, and she endeavoured to console her, telling her at the same time that women were not permitted to travel to the States now.

There was no escape, no freedom of choice. The blow was a staggering one and Kate cried

out feverishly, "I'll give up; I'll die. It's the only thing to do."

Molly had often announced she would give up, had often threatened instant dissolution. This was the first time Kate had lost courage. Matters were serious indeed when she despaired. Consolation must be administered at once.

"Ah, sure, we'll get used to going without sugar like everything else," she remarked consolingly. "Oh, you'd get used to anything. Sure, the bread is made of all sorts of combustibles. And we eat them and don't mind one bit."

"That's true," Kate returned; "a year back the bread was as white as a hound's tooth; but now 'tis no better than the sweepings of the road. Sugar is a different thing howsomever. I always loved the teapot, and the times I was down I found 'twas a cup of hot, sweet tea that cured me. Now that's gone. They're taking every bit from us. . . . Oh, where will it end, Molly? Where will it end?"

The two women drew close together by the fire shivering, and asking each other that question as many hundreds of others asked it in those dark days when the shadow of famine had fallen over the land. But they did not dare to seek an answer, did not dare to look forward, and so they huddled together, whispering to each other of the good days that lay behind them until the glowing coal in the range was grey ash, and Molly had fallen asleep with her head resting on Kate's shoulder.

For a while the latter let her sleep on; sleep



was a refuge; sleep was almost as peaceful as death. Besides, it was possible to think undisturbed. And Kate let her mind wander back to the afternoon when she had gone out shopping. It was hot and sultry July weather. The streets were cruel in their dustiness and in their close atmosphere. The country would be fresh and sweet with the scent of hayfields in the air she had thought as she walked along Merriion Row, and then the old hunger for the land swept over her — a hunger for the fields, for harvest-times, for the west wind blowing, for the sun and rain playing in turn upon her face, for the clean happy exultation of it all. She had had to stop in her walk and look into a shop window to hide the tears in her eyes. Then, having recovered herself and begun her shopping, she had been told at the grocer's that a shipload of sugar had been sunk off the southern coast, and the rest of the afternoon had been spent by her in a vain search for a little sweetening for her tea.

Food was growing scarcer and dearer every day. Her place was in the country gathering in the crops, fighting the hunger that threatened these pale pinched people in the cities. But a change of work, a return to the land, would mean facing back to Droumavalla, facing back to old memories, facing back to Steve and Michael again. For a little while she had lost them and been happy. Now they were with her, now they troubled her peace as the longing for the land besieged her heart. And in that still hour while Molly slept beside her she remade her resolution

not to return home. She fought down the craving for the life she loved, a life that could only be possible when she had succeeded in burying the memory of the two brothers very deep — so deep in dark forgetfulness they could never haunt or trouble her soul again. It seemed a wrong and a wicked thing to put the thought of them from her mind, but she could not face the world otherwise. And as she roused her sleeping companion she murmured a little pitifully as if to reassure herself:

“Ah, sure, God is with them and they have good prayers.”

## CHAPTER XIV

THE sugar crisis passed, and though Kate was condemned to drink many cups of unsweetened tea, there were pleasant times when, concentrating on one meal her whole ration for the week, she drank, after much stirring with a knife handle, three full cups that might have been poured out in pre-war days so sweet and strong were they. Certainly, there were depressing Sundays when all had gone on the Saturday night's carouse, when a whole week without a grain of sugar seemed to stretch endlessly before her. But quite a number of interests filled up her leisure moments, and they made the time pass with such surprising swiftness the six days' fast was not such a heavy burden after all.

A game of a subtle and varied nature, played with 131B, had progressed in an extraordinary fashion; its developments filled Kate's mind to the exclusion of other and more disagreeable matters. She had discovered that Tom was unable to say anything harsh and unflattering to her. If she teased him he would become melancholy or sullen: he would never upbraid her; and she played upon this weakness of his, and upon the fact that he was ever ready to perform little acts of service for her. She used him as if he were a messenger

boy, and set him many tasks and yet failed to exhaust his patience. She also discovered, that by merely looking at him between the eyes without speaking, he became awkward and uneasy, shuffled his large feet, tweaked his hair, rubbed his ear until it was scarlet, blew his nose and hung out other signals of distress. It was extremely good entertainment to reduce him to this abject state of foolishness, more particularly as his conversation was not as varied and interesting as in those first days of their acquaintance in Dublin. He had lost his large interest in the universe, or, rather, it had narrowed down to an interest in the problem of domesticity, especially the financial side, and having dwelt upon the joys of a little villa in the suburbs, he would grow melancholy, and would talk at great length about the cost of living and the difficulties facing a man who had to rear a long weak family in war-time. Kate, on every possible occasion, snubbed this latent passion for domestic science, and tried to interest him in other topics; but her efforts were in vain. The husband and father, the family man, was an obsession with him. He always came back to the problem of rearing a family, and decided at length, with some regret, that the average police sergeant might rear a family of four, but if he went outside that limit lean days were before him.

Kate soon found effectual means for putting an end to conversation dealing with the family man. Whenever 131B began about a little house in Ranelagh, and the difficulties attendant on its maintenance, she proceeded to talk about firemen, to

dilate upon the dangers of their life, upon their courage, and to compare most unfavourably the dark uniforms of the D.M.P. with their beautiful scarlet shirts. The shirt was like a red rag to a bull, and on occasions made 131B stamp and fume up and down the kitchen. Kate's words were not enough to put him into this wild state, there was a secret spring to his irritation. At this particular period a portion of his working hours were spent in Brunswick Street, outside the fire brigade station. Kate, on her free afternoons, would go there and walk up and down outside the entrance to the station in order, as she informed 131B, that she might catch a glimpse of the handsomest men in Dublin as they passed in and out in their scarlet shirts.

One day she devised another torment of a peculiarly excruciating kind. She happened to have in her possession an old broken camera. It was against the law to use a camera anywhere in Dublin, but she took it with her the afternoon she made her usual journey to Brunswick Street, and planting herself outside the station, pretended to snap any stray fireman who happened to be hanging about at the time.

It was the duty of a policeman who perceived even the nose of a camera in a Dublin street to arrest its possessor. The law was quite clear as to the illegality of snapshots. 131B, who was standing between the tram lines about a hundred yards away when Kate drew this offensive article from under her coat, first scowled, then stamped his feet, and finally turned his superb back on the



transgressor, taking no further notice of her whatever. She remained near the station for about ten minutes. Then, having successfully defied the large policeman on his own beat, defied the law of the land, committed high treason, she marched off feeling very happy and pleased with herself.

The consequences of these torments were, however, of a disconcerting and unexpected kind. Kate, believing she had made herself thoroughly odious in the sight of 131B, learnt one evening that she was the object of his affections, that he was ready to spill his life's blood for her to any extent and degree, and that in the meantime he was prepared to rent a little house in Ranelagh, consisting of four small rooms, if she would agree to marry him.

Kate had refused this offer with such fervour he had retired hastily and awkwardly, and there had been no news, no sign of him for over a fortnight. She was hurt at this desertion and wrote to him inviting him to tea one evening; he had replied that he would most certainly come at the hour mentioned, and that he would have much to say to her. There was a distinct determination in the few lines he had penned, lines in which he assured her that, as long as she was unwed, he would not give up hope. This alarming declaration caused her to take fright and to invite Joe Spillane to tea on the same evening.

She felt aggrieved and ill-used because she liked Tom Casey very much as a companion. It was a pity to spoil their pleasant friendship with such a foolish proposal. She would be compelled to cut

his acquaintance if he persisted in the matter. When he chose, when domestic study did not occupy his mind, he was the most interesting member of her circle of men friends. It would be a pity to lose him, and yet she could not possibly accept him as a husband nor could she be bothered with his love-making.

She thought with a shiver of the little house like a box in Ranelagh suggested by Tom as a fitting home for them; she thought of the miles of other little houses of exactly the same size and shape, of the narrow life with its limited interests, which was the lot of the many hundreds of wives who lived cooped up in these places for the whole of their mortal existence. If she chose such a life it would mean that her freedom would be taken from her and that she would rarely, if ever, see the country she loved. It could not be, it was an impossibility, and yet she was determined to keep Tom Casey as a friend. They would have to come to some agreement; she must speak very plainly to him that evening. Before this plain speaking, however, before the announcement was made that he must give up all hope of her, he would have to be coaxed into a good humour, and in order that she might induce in him this very necessary serenity of mind she made elaborate preparations for his tea.

"Ah, my Lord, Molly," she exclaimed as she put cups and saucers on the table; "'tis worth while throwing any quantity of food down a man, for you get full value and over for it; but 'tis dangerous waste to throw it down a woman."

"I don't know that 't isn't waste to throw it down a man the size of Tom," objected Molly. "Sure a whole cow wouldn't feed the like of him. He'll swamp up all before him. That loaf and that pot of jam wouldn't feed a little bird by his ideas. And you're giving him half a ration of sugar. You'll be demented without it."

The sugar was certainly a sacrifice which Kate made very willingly. She felt that if she could get Tom into a good humour she could make him do what she pleased. A half ration of sugar devoted to two cups of tea was enough to put any man into a good temper in war-time; and, counting upon the sweetening of his tea insuring the sweetening of his temper, she surveyed her preparations for his entertainment with some pride.

"Ah, we'll make great sport with the chaps this evening, Molly," she cried. "I'll be counting on your minding Joe Spillane as if you were his nurse, for I'll have more than a word to say to Tom."

A knock at the door prevented any reply. 131B had arrived punctually to the moment; and as soon as he entered, Kate, extending a pleasant friendly greeting to him, invited him to seat himself in the largest chair in the room, the only chair that could comfortably support his substantial person. Latterly, though it was war-time, he had put on much weight, and had now the portly presence and awesome figure of a typical member of the D.M.P.

Much to Kate's surprise he refused the proffered chair and stood awkwardly in the middle of

the room twirling his cap round between his fingers. She began to tease him for being so shy, but she had scarcely uttered half-a-dozen words when he made a violent plunge across the kitchen and sank heavily into the chair he had just refused.

"It's very hot," he remarked in an unnaturally low voice, passing his hand across his forehead and then rubbing his moistened palm against his trousers. "Someways I'm always warm when I come in here."

"Kate is always hot too. That's because she's in love," Molly interjected facetiously.

"Oh, no, love is a cool thing. It puts you in a cold sweat," Kate looked significantly at 131B as she spoke, and then noting a queer gleam in his eyes she became convinced that it was not anxious love alone that made him look so unhappy and appear so uneasy; there was some secret affliction weighing upon his mind. Her first impulse was to go to the table and take up the teapot with the intention of making a strong brew of hot, sweet tea that would be sure to console him and put his mind at ease. But his trouble was of an infectious kind, and instead of opening the canister under her hand she let her fingers play among the tea-things and make a clatter with the spoons and cups, finally remarking nervously: "Last winter all the teapots were broken by the dint of frost."

131B made no reply; he pulled at his ear until it was the colour of a tomato, tweaked his hair and with great care drew a large circle on the floor with the square toe of his boot.

"For the love of God tell us what's the matter,"

burst out Kate so suddenly that Molly jumped and the policeman writhed in his chair with a sinuous movement like the long rolling motion of a steamer in a rough sea.

"Matter," he growled, "why, everything's the matter."

"Then say it out and be done with it," cried Kate impatiently.

"A draft of the D.M.P. is to be sent to fight in France. Joe Spillane is off to-night and I'm to go in three weeks' time."

He had to repeat the news twice over before Kate could take in its full significance, and then she stared dully at him, muttering: "A draft of the D.M.P., a draft of the D.M.P. And I suppose all the boys I know are going?"

"Every one," he replied. "I can tell you it took the light out of my pipe when I heard it, but now I've steadied down a bit and I'm ready to face in to what's before me."

There was a patter of eager questions from the two women, and when 131B had told them all the circumstances and explained that there was no prospect whatever of his being left behind, that it was as certain as if he were an able-bodied soldier that he would be sent to France within the month, Kate completely lost control of herself, and as she paced up and down the kitchen poured out a torrent of rapid angry words.

"I'd like to have the Kaiser's skull between my two bare hands I would, and he bringing this cruel war down on us. Oh, why wouldn't he leave us alone? Why wouldn't he let us be at



peace?" Kate paused to wrestle with a sob in her throat, and then went on rather pitifully. "The Kaiser don't believe in God. Sure, I don't know how he'd face Heaven if he did. If he believed he wouldn't do it, and in His presence like. Sure, I wouldn't do what was wrong and the presence of some one dear to me in the house. . . . Oh, I'd like to put the Kaiser through a mangle I would. I'd mangle him flat, and he trying to kill all the men in the world. . . . Sure, if the men were any good at all they'd capture the Kaiser and put him in a room with King George, and let them box away till they're beaten to a pulp, till they're dead. Look at them. Not a scratch, not a breeze touching them, and all the men in the world being killed." Kate turned appealingly to 131B. He, however, had apparently no suggestions to make as to the methods to be adopted in order to bring about this boxing match, and having scratched his head and looked diffidently about him, as if Kate's appeal did him too much honour, replied with a forced attempt at lightness:

"Oh, the Keyser's a queer old lad. The man who'd kill him ought to get a rocking-chair in Heaven."

"And may the devils dance round him when the end comes," burst out Kate.

"They'll dance the queer old hornpipe," interjected 131B, with a horrible attempt at gaiety.

"Don't, Tom, don't talk like that," she implored; "'tis no time for joking . . . oh, my God!"

Molly quietly withdrew from the kitchen, and Tom rose and went over to Kate, who had pressed her hands against her face and was trembling and quivering from head to foot as if she had suddenly been struck by a great chill force that stole from her all power over her limbs.

"'Twon't be so bad, Kate," he said. "You can't be sure of anything. Maybe I'll come through it safe."

"All the men in the world being killed," she muttered.

"I'd like dearly to have stayed at home," he continued. "God knows I'd have been readier for it any other time but this. I'm not afraid to go. It's something else I'm minding. I'd set my heart on that little house in Ranelagh, and we two living in it. There's no chance of it now . . . unless — unless . . ."

Kate had withdrawn her hands from her eyes and was looking at him as he hesitated, seeking for words that would not come, and looking about him anxiously. "Unless —" he went on. "Oh, it's not fair to say it. But, Kate, if you'd marry me in a week or two I'd go out to the slaughter a happy man."

"I couldn't, Tom — I couldn't," she cried vehemently; "there's much I'd do for you, but 'twouldn't be right to do that. I'd hate the little house; I'd hate everything. 'Twould be a wrong to yourself to marry you, for if you came back you'd find I didn't care for you the way you wanted, and you'd be mad."

"Ah, that's all nonsense. If you can have me

as a friend you can have me as a husband, and I cracked about you."

"I couldn't — I couldn't."

"So you'll let me go without a word," he said sadly; "I can see I'm not worth anything to you, but maybe you'll give a thought to me and I a corpse riddled with balls."

"Ah, stop, Tom — stop," she implored.

"If you were promised to me even, if I was sure of you 'twould ease my mind greatly." He paused only to break out wrathfully a moment later, "I can't go off to France and I wanting you so bad. You'll forget me; you'll take up with some other fellow. Oh, Kate — Kate, would you let me face out to my death without a promise, without one word from you?"

She turned away her face, motioning him from her with her hand. "Give me a little time," she begged. "I don't rightly know what to say, I'm distracted. Can't you let me be a while? I'll have an answer for you to-morrow or the day after maybe — only leave me alone, leave me a short spell to myself."

He realised that he might spoil the effect of his appeal if he stayed any longer. So he bade her good-bye and made for the area door. As soon as it closed behind him she went out into the passage and called Molly, asking her to come into the kitchen at once. She had a craving for companionship, a craving for some one to talk to, some one who would be sympathetic and yet would not ask questions. She wanted to put off the difficult hour when she would have to wrestle with herself

and decide what was best for her to do, decide what answer she would make to Tom.

"I'm very sorry, Kate," Molly began; "it's a terrible overcome for you. But Tom is a big fellow and he'll look after himself, you may be sure. Oh, believe me, he's as safe as if he was in God's pocket."

"Indeed he isn't safe," the other flashed back. "If he was a little chap he'd win through; but a great long fellow like him has no chance. A man that size will be shot down at once. There's no hope for him."

"You mind his going greatly?" inquired Molly.

"And how wouldn't I mind? Himself and Joe Spillane come from my own place. Oh, the lads from County Cork are the best of all. You wouldn't meet their equal in Ireland." Kate sat down close to Molly, and putting her hand on the other's lap began speaking eagerly and quickly: "You wouldn't know — not being there. But when I was a girl growing up we'd great times in Droumavalla. You'd have your fill of joking the year through and the harvest-time would be grand altogether. Fine sprees we'd have. I'd be dancing them old cob wheels and sets and jigs till six in the morning, and then I'd go home and light the fire and start the day's work."

"They must have been gamey fellows to foot it through with you till that hour," said Molly sympathetically.

"Sure, they'd bring you through the dance whether you were on your feet or not. Oh, there

never was a nicer lot of chaps anywhere than at Droumavalla. I never heard them say an ugly word, and they wouldn't give you a bit of trouble. Most of them were poor boys out of labourers' cottages. They'd cut great hunks of bread and hand out the tea in mugs and wash up and all after the dancing. Then off with them to the hay, and they'd be working the whole day and dancing the night through again. Indeed, they'd learn you to live."

With a little sigh Kate relapsed into silence, and for a while Molly said nothing, for she feared to disturb the happy look on her friend's face. Apparently she had forgotten that Tom would be off to France in a month; she had forgotten everything; she was lost in a dream of the past. Gradually, however, the brightness left her face as the pictures of old times stole back into the depth of memory and the aggressive present harshly outlined itself in her mind again.

"Tell me," said Molly at length, "what made you leave Droumavalla when you came back from America? I'm thinking you'd be happier there than in Dublin."

Kate looked at her friend with heavy eyes, replying: "I left Droumavalla because the place was empty, because of the great loneliness. There was the village. You could walk down the High Street for five or six hours at a stretch and not meet a soul to bid you the time of day. In an alley where there'd be sixty men playing skittles and cards there's not one now. All the lads are gone — dead in France years ago and forgotten.



It might have been another war it's so long ago. . . . Men of my own age have paid their all. . . ."

Kate broke off; she was about to tell Molly the history of Michael and Steve, but words failed her, she could not bring herself to speak further. And when, about half an hour later, Molly suggested she should go to bed she made no reply, merely shaking her head and turning her face away.

There are stories that cannot be told; there are periods in every life when silence is the only cure.

## CHAPTER XV

SAVE for a glimmer from the fire the kitchen was in darkness. The trams had ceased running and the streets were silent; at last noisy Dublin was at rest, and the time for quiet thought had come. Kate's mind went back to the first night she had spent in this shabby, restless city after her return from America. She remembered her pleasure at the sight of the crowds that thronged O'Connell Street, Westmoreland Street and College Green; she recalled her intense relief, her excitement and great joy when a file of dark uniformed men had marched past the old Parliament Houses, and she had recognised two faces among them, faces she had known since childhood. The shadow of loneliness, the lurking terror of a world empty of man had passed from her; she had felt reassured and consoled; the old fresh outlook on life had become hers again.

In spite of her first difficulties she had been very happy in Dublin; now all her pleasure in the dawning of each day was to be swept away; Dublin for her would soon be almost as solitary as Droumavalla. And yet, if she had been able to persuade her friends in the police force to desert, if it had been in her power to hide them from the authorities, she would not have used that power, she would not even have tried to influence Tom Casey. She had no patience with the men who

took neither side, who in her opinion shirked and therefore were no men at all. She had a woman's respect for the men who were ready to fight for their beliefs when the call came; and while she respected them she felt it was right and fitting they should defend what they regarded as their country. And yet she mourned over the departure of the D.M.P., for those huge men were going in most cases to their death — mourned over them as she had mourned over the boys who had left Droumavalla to die in Gallipoli, in France and in the rising of Easter week. All of them were fine men cut off in the prime of life. They could not be replaced. Where would two such boys as Steve and Michael be found again? If Eugene had not been so weak he would have possessed equally with them what she appreciated in a man; and as Kate thought of him, almost involuntarily she compared him with Tom Casey. The latter had behaved in a manly way; he had said he was ready to face in to what was before him, at any rate he was no coward. And yet, though he had proved himself to be "a whole man" he was not what she was looking for, he was not what she desired.

Her head was burning, but her limbs were stiff with cold. Rising from her crouching position by the range and stretching herself she perceived that the latch had fallen and that the area door was ajar. A cool breeze came in through the opening, and she went over to it and closed it. The kitchen was warm enough; the numbness left her limbs in a minute or two as she moved up and down the

room. But she could not rid herself of the chill at her heart; she was frightened now, so frightened she very nearly decided to rouse Molly and get her to keep her company. She would have been thankful for the noise of the trams, for the whistling of late strollers, the hoot of a motor horn, any sound that would divert her, keep her mind from dwelling on the horrible possibility that like some dark face seemed to peer and grin and mock at her out of the heavy twilight of the future.

Was death waiting there terrible in silence and in malignancy — waiting to snatch away her happiness from her as it had been snatched before? She had only come to know the wish of her own heart when it was too late, when she had returned from America and Steve and Michael were lost to her for ever. Was she going to make that mistake again? Would she find when she had turned away from Tom Casey, when he too was gone, that she loved him?

She cried out in her pain, and then shivered again. Why was she set this difficult question? Why when she had extricated herself from the misery of regret, fled from the scalding memories that hung about Droumavalla, why was she not allowed to follow the pleasant way of life she had chosen? And again she thought the same thoughts that had been hers the night she had walked home from Coomacarn. God was hard and pitiless; He was without mercy; He would not permit her to escape from the consequences of a mistake made in all innocence, made in the thoughtless period of youth.

The blind was growing pale, the darkness was lifting from the murky streets when Kate stopped in her walk and turned to leave the room; she was ready for sleep at last. Faith had come back as the future cleared for her. She felt that an opportunity had been given her to make up for that blunder in the past, and she dared not refuse it lest worse misfortune should befall her. She must do what Tom wished — and perhaps in time happiness would come of it. She regarded him merely as a friend, but she could not let him go out to what might be his death without her promise. She was not prepared to risk repeating the mistake she had made before. It would not be possible for her to bear the burden of atonement, the burden of hours of suffering and remorse a second time.

Once Kate had made up her mind she was swift to act. Two days later she summoned 131B, suggested an outing together, and as they walked along by the river Dodder informed him of her decision, and promised that the week before he went out to France she would marry him.

He was much elated; and having told her there had never been such love, such devotion as his in the world before, he endeavoured to press against her cheeks with much force and animation his own heavily moustached lips.

Curiously enough, on the face of her acceptance of him, this action of his annoyed her extremely; it was with difficulty she restrained her first impulse, which was to strike his rosy flabby cheeks with her fist in no gentle or even playful fashion.



However, she disengaged herself from his grasp in a sufficiently peremptory manner, and he drew back from her disconcerted and troubled, inquiring nervously whether, in view of the fact that they were engaged, he had not this particular right-of-way across her countenance. No Dublin street urchins or other individuals, who might be enthusiastically interested in such amatory attentions, were in sight. It was therefore both a seemly and a proper occasion for this ancient and approved method of setting a definite seal upon an engagement.

Kate, having surveyed 131B with some sternness and stepped back so that there was another yard or more between them, observed coolly:

"You know well I don't like men that are too hot no more than I like men that are too heavy."

"But sure I'm in love," he protested.

"In love, is it? Listen to me now, Tom. You're a sensible man in your middle years, and you should know at this time of day that love is nothing but insanity. I'm no more in love with you than with our own tom-cat that I belted with an ash plant this morning for eating the meat on me. Howsomever, I've a liking for the ould puss as I've a liking for you: that's the way it stands. But I don't want any coogling or coaxing or making sheep's eyes at me. So you may take it or leave it as you please."

"I'll take anything, Kate — I'll take anything. It's gorgeous to have you my own anyway, and you'll come round in time — never fear." 131B, then, very wisely refraining from further atten-

tions of an intimate kind, suggested a continuation of their walk, and as they strolled along the river-bank made sage comparisons between the liberty enjoyed by a married woman and a woman in service; he assured Kate that she would have a free hand in the arrangement of the little house he intended to offer her, and for nearly two hours he expatiated on its glories. She showed no enthusiasm and said very little in reply to his long statements of prices of pots and pans, furniture and door-mats; but towards the end of the walk she began to feel that she mightn't be doing so badly in getting married to such a sensible, level-headed man; and having come to this conclusion, and being of a generous, open-handed nature, and grateful for Tom's liberal calculations in regard to household ware, she proffered her cheek to him when dusk had fallen and the chill of the evening had driven other couples back to the city.

The following day was made notable by the arrival of a bulky letter from Denis. He found it difficult to express himself on paper, and regarded the manipulation of a pen with apprehension, if not with alarm. He wrote to Kate about three times a year, and in this particular letter enclosed a five-pound note for her birthday, and informed her that he was sending her by rail a sack of potatoes, some prime heads of cabbage and a goose, as she had told him the last time she wrote of the catastrophical failure of the sugar supply, and he feared for her health if she did not obtain sufficient nourishment to make up for that loss. She had just decided to present 131B with the

goose, when she perceived on another page a long *P.S.* written in the clerkly hand of the school-master, but partly dictated by Denis. It gave her news of such importance she promptly burnt the stirabout she was making for breakfast and smashed an egg-cup with a violent sweep of her hand.

From the *P.S.* she learnt that John Turpin and his wife had died within a few days of each other, and that Eugene had become the owner of Coomacarn about three weeks before the writing of the letter. His father had been failing for several months, and he had been virtually master of the farm and of the old man's balance in the bank for some time before his death. The feeling of independence, the sense of ownership, had transformed him. He had become a new being, and had amazed the inhabitants of Droumavalla by his energy and his intellect. His first move was to invite a lecturer down from the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society. This gentleman had formed a co-operative society among the farmers of the neighbourhood, a society whose object was the purchase of seeds and manures at wholesale prices, and also various machines and farm implements too costly for any one member to buy for himself. Secondly, a general store was started in the village, owned by the members of the society, to whom were sold goods required by them at what was practically cost price. Eugene, having done his own work during the day, had spent his evenings in going from house to house preaching union among the farmers and gathering in new members

from remote parts of the country. But he was not even content with the work of propaganda, and he now had plans for starting a mill which would belong to the society and grind the members' corn. For the organisation had been a great success, and much time and money had already been saved by the farmers.

The letter containing this information was written on exercise paper, and Kate, having gathered its contents, let the sheets flutter from her hand to the ground as she stared idly before her. It was just the work she would have loved to share with Eugene. The planning, the contriving, the strategy that were necessary to get all those men to stand together were exactly after her own heart, especially when it meant the improvement of land, the saving of time and labour on the farm. A typed letter from the head office of the I.A.O.S. was enclosed with the other. It stated that the creation of the society, its ensuing prosperity, were almost entirely due to Mr. Turpin's energy and activity. He had accomplished this work single-handed, for it had been difficult for the farmers to understand the nature of a co-operative society, and the organiser sent to them had not been able to stay with them long. Kate recalled Eugene's words: "It's the land makes the man;" and for the first time since she had left Droumavalla she wondered if she had judged him wrongly. Perhaps he had been right to sacrifice himself, to allow himself to be ill-used, to cringe to his father for the sake of Coomacarn; but he had no right to sacrifice his brothers, to keep them, as she believed,

divided; she could not bring herself to forgive him that.

Though she felt hot and angry as she thought of the last afternoon she had spent with Eugene, she did not attempt to banish him from her thoughts. She took up the sheets she had dropped and read them carefully through a second time. As she was putting them back in the envelope she came upon a scrap of paper tucked into one corner of it. This was a further *P.S.* written by Denis two days later than the rest of the letter. In it he stated that the goose was a gift from Eugene, that in a few days' time he was going to Dublin to attend the annual general meeting of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, at which he was to speak, and that he wished to know if he might call and see her.

Kate's first feeling was one of intense pleasure. He still wished to see her, in spite of the cold letter she had written him; he still thought of her, though now he was a leader, busy with great schemes, looked up to by all the people of the village. And yet, in spite of her pleasure, she recognised that such a meeting would be a folly and she dared not permit it. She was afraid of his power over her; it was strange that a weak man could move her so deeply, cause her to lose control of herself, and she felt ashamed and disturbed all that day, and was only partly reassured when a letter to Denis was written and despatched. It contained a curt message for Eugene, which was to the effect that she would not see him and wished to have nothing to do with him ever again.



131B called that evening, and when she had talked to him for a little while all doubt as to whether she had acted rightly left her. The hour for Tom's departure was drawing near, and he was in one of his melancholy moods, and told her gruesome tales of the sufferings of the troops in France. So harrowed were Kate's feelings she allowed him to embrace her, when Molly was not looking, in the discreet shelter of certain petticoats that were hanging on the clothes-line which was suspended across the kitchen.

A feeling, not so much of affection as of tenderness, possessed her for this large healthy man. She felt a little like a mother whose child is condemned to go out into the dark all alone. The dread of that night over France that would so soon gather thickly about Tom, so soon swallow him up in all his great strength and fine brave masculinity, made her long to do anything in her power to serve him. He behaved in a very manly way; he did not complain; he showed no fear though, on this particular evening at any rate, he had apparently made up his mind that for him there would be no return.

She was seized with a desire to make the most of these last days, to give him what happiness was within her power. She wanted very badly to lay all her possessions at his feet. And yet, when she came to review them in her mind, such generosity seemed scarcely appropriate to the occasion or even advisable. Her clothes, those precious petticoats hanging on the line for instance, would scarcely give him satisfaction — not even the

shadow of the thrill she had experienced in buying them would be his when he received them from her. He might even regard them as a joke in rather bad taste instead of a very real sacrifice. Her new umbrella with the silver knob and the "gosling," her deep, yellow hat, prized possessions, would also be most unsuitable offerings. Inspiration, however, came to her in a moment. She would make him a present of fifty-two of the back numbers of *Erin's Own*. They were both valuable and interesting documents, as they contained the complete serial of "Dicing with Death," and their "Chats with the Doctor" should most certainly be useful to Tom in view of the privations before him. Why, in the very last number a whole column was devoted to the cure of an aching corn, and wise suggestions were made as to the dissipation of inflammation of the great toe. The author of these counsels, being too genteel to use the ordinary term for this affliction, refrained from calling it a bunion.

Kate was about to administer consolation to 131B by telling him she intended to offer him this princely gift when there came a knock at the area door. Molly answered it, and, after a brief altercation, bore into the kitchen in her arms, holding it as if it were a baby, an immense parcel, from which protruded two yellow claws and the beak and neck of a bird. Brown paper still covered the body, and the bird merely looked as if it had grown out of its clothes.

"Miss Carmody, Hatch Street," Molly read the address aloud, and then flung her burden into

Kate's arms, who, promptly tearing off the paper, revealed the plump proportions of a large goose. She did not hesitate, or even pause to consider the wisdom of her action, but, in her turn, flung it into the arms of 131B, saying carelessly:

"Here, take the old bird. 'Twill make you a fine dinner on Sunday, and will give you your fill of eating."

131B was enchanted with this gift, and having protested that he could not on any account accept it, and having in the same breath extravagantly thanked Kate for this kingly dinner, he asked her if the bird — and there never had been such a bird hatched out before — was sent from County Cork from her brother Denis.

It was an unfortunate question, as it reminded Kate of the *P.S.*, which informed her that Eugene was sending her a goose. She turned very red and looked very foolish, replying at length with a stammer that nobody had sent it to her from the country.

"Who is nobody?" inquired 131B.

"Oh, somebody you don't know a bit about," she returned shortly, and though he pressed her, she refused to tell him the name of the donor. She felt so upset at the reflection that it was Eugene's goose, and by the thought that she should most certainly send it back to him, that she at length asked 131B to return it to her.

He carnivorously smiled, and shook his head. "Give it back to you! Oh, I wouldn't part with it for anything in the world, not for all the riches

of the stout and porter people — Guinness, I mean."

"But you said you felt you'd no right to take it, that you couldn't on any account accept it," she objected. "It's a shame to force a goose on an unwilling man."

"Sure, 'twas only a manner of speaking," he replied, stroking the bird's broad breast affectionately; "this goose is a gorgeous present, Kate — gorgeous. It's the first thing you've ever given me, and I set great store by it. Indeed, I'd like to have it stuffed and put in a glass case I value it so highly."

There was nothing more to be said in the face of such enthusiasm; and a little later 131B departed, fondly clasping the goose to his broad chest, in great spirits at the advance he had evidently made in Kate's affections, and much cheered by the prospect of Sunday's dinner.



## CHAPTER XVI

EUGENE had called, and had been refused admittance by Molly, who had been sent to the door for this purpose, and Kate's agitation was set at rest.

On the morning following his visit the entire Barry family departed for the country, where they intended to spend a week-end. The meeting, at which Eugene was to be present, was open to the public, and took place early in the day, and Kate obtained permission from her mistress before she left to go out at that particular hour.

She would only spend a few minutes at the meeting. She wanted to see if Eugene were changed, and once having satisfied herself on this point would slip out again. When she reached the Gresham Hotel in O'Connell Street she hung about the entrance for a minute or two, then perceiving some men evidently up from the country, followed them through the vestibule, and her name having been taken by a youth wearing a badge, entered a large hall almost full of farmers — there could be no mistaking their trade — and a sprinkling of women among them. The meeting was already in progress, and suddenly feeling shy and awkward, Kate slipped into a seat not far from the door. A grey-bearded man, with a pale face and narrow shoulders, was speaking. He did not look like a farmer in Kate's opinion, and yet,



though she was not able to follow all he said, he showed great knowledge of the difficulties farmers had to face, and she applauded him vigorously when he sat down, informing in a whisper a sharp-featured woman who sat next her that he was a fine little chap, and had done very well indeed.

The chairman having addressed the meeting, men of various kinds, tall and stout, long and thin, speaking in the soft sing-song speech of the south, in the sharp curt accents of the north, or occasionally in the Dublin nasal twang, succeeded each other with monotonous regularity. And though their speeches interested Kate prodigiously, she gradually became impatient and anxious, afraid that she might miss Eugene and not see him after all. Time was passing, she could only stay for another five minutes or so.

An old man from Wexford had just ended a truculent, rather quarrelsome harangue by shaking his fist, and by being pulled down into his seat by his companions, when there was a stir in the middle of the hall, and a tall spare figure arose. The face was hidden, but scarcely had the words "Mr. Chairman" been uttered than Kate half-started to her feet with a muffled cry. A murmur of "Order, order," caused her to sink back, crouching down in her seat, ashamed and deeply troubled. The speaker continued without even turning his head, giving out in a clear, resolute voice an account of the work accomplished by the society at Droumavalla, of the great opposition that had to be overcome and of the obstacles that one by one had been laid low.

It was Eugene Turpin, and he spoke with the old warmth that had characterised his utterances whenever he had talked of Coomacarn and the land. His enthusiasm infected his listeners; his speech was punctuated by bursts of clapping, and at the end he received round upon round of applause.

A mist veiled Kate's eyes, and a sensation of such intoxicating happiness swept over her for a little while she lost consciousness of where she was, and she could not have stirred from her place if she had been bidden to rise. When at length she recovered her composure she wanted to go up to Eugene and clap him on the back, and tell him how proud she was to know him, but he was five rows nearer the platform, and she was afraid the little man with the grey beard might rise and denounce her if she attempted to show her satisfaction in this particularly vigorous way. It would be terrible to be called to order and perhaps forcibly ejected from the hall. So, having glanced once more at the back of Eugene's tumbled head of hair, she pushed out past the sharp-featured woman, and in a minute or two was in the street making her way home again.

Kate was very busy during the rest of the day, as a mild spring cleaning had to be carried out in the absence of the family. She was sitting in the kitchen feeling rather tired, after much moving of furniture and scrubbing of floors, when 131B made his appearance in company with Molly, who had gone out on a message. His manner was strange and his fashion of procedure unusual. Instead of

gaping at his betrothed from the doorway as was his custom, he crossed the room in two enormous strides, and grasping Kate's arm exclaimed:

"I've grand news — grand news. You'll be hopping for joy when you hear it. They're not going to send the D.M.P. to France. And though I wouldn't mind a crack at the Germans myself, still and all it's far better to stay at home, because — because I have you, Kate, and we can get married as soon as we please."

She had prayed hard that this fine man should be spared, that he should not be sent out to the carnage in France, and now that her prayer was granted she was dismayed beyond words. With a great effort she managed to conceal her trouble and pretend to a pleasure she did not feel with her whole heart. But it irked her to be compelled to act a part, she who had always been straightforward in her methods and frank in her speech. What was particularly trying was his announcement, "I have you, Kate," and the air of proprietorship he assumed as if she were an article of furniture that had just come into his possession. It rankled that she should be owned by him, as it were, be one of his possessions just as much as the pair of square-toed boots on his feet were his particular belongings, and could not be worn, even if they fitted, by any one else. He was obstinate and determined, wedded to his own particular ideas. If she married him she would, like these same boots, have to trim and pare and wear herself into his habits and particular methods of life. That would mean a change of character

for herself; if such a process was followed out they would come to resemble each other in time. And now, as she watched him, while he talked eagerly and fluently, she wondered if she would grow red and flabby like him and have to let out her clothes at intervals in order to keep pace with increasing corpulency; would she live like him for the pleasures of Guinness' stout, salt meat, heavy viands, the little house in Ranelagh and an occasional discussion of the *Herald* in which his word would be law? Would there be nothing else in her life, no fine plans and schemes like those of Eugene, no gradual building up of a farm and of a society, no continual making and moulding, no contriving, no watch over gradual growth, no final triumph of creation?

These questions Kate put to herself in her own way, and the answer came back to her so clearly she turned from Tom with a writhe of disgust.

"What's up, Kate?" he inquired reproachfully. "I don't believe you've been listening at all."

"Oh, I have — I have," she replied hastily; "but I didn't catch the last thing you were saying."

"I was telling you about three lovely little houses, with four rooms apiece, not far from the tram line. One is called Windsor, the other Buckingham Palace, the other Balmoral. Their names speak for themselves; they're very choice and genteel. They're only built six months, and they're to let. Any one of them would suit us to a T. It's up to you to come out and have a look at them some day."

"I won't go out and look at them," cried Kate, rising quickly from her chair; "I won't go near them. I'm sick of your little houses. I don't want to hear one word more about them ever again." Her voice trembled as she uttered these last words, and without waiting for an answer, with her hand to her face, hurried across the room and out into the passage, banging her bedroom door behind her.

"What in the livings earth is the matter?" exclaimed 131B, turning to Molly, his jaw dropping in dismay.

"She's ill. She's feeling bad; I'm sure she's feeling bad. People always go on that way when their innards are disturbed like."

"She'll be back in a while maybe," Tom replied, and there being no more to say and the situation being an awkward one, he solemnly grunted three times, then drawing out his pouch pared off a hunk of tobacco with his knife and put it in his mouth. They had not been alone together since the presentation of the bog oak brooch, and he did not feel exactly at his ease, and therefore took refuge in tobacco, which, when chewed in large quantities, is a solid obstacle to speech, soothes the nerves, and is also of assistance in regard to the working of the brain when it is puzzled and befogged and requires a stimulant.

Molly had no tobacco to chew; there was nothing to assist her in concealing her embarrassment or her nerves, and she would have left the room at once if her interest had not been intensely excited by Windsor, Balmoral and Buckingham



Palace. After several coughs and after much scraping of her shoes against the stone floor, she told 131B that she had been very struck with the account he had given of these mansions, and that she was longing to hear more about them, as the one craving of her life was to possess such a little house as he had described.

Tom promptly confided in her that he hated barrack life, and that her craving was his also. He mourned over the fact that Kate did not share his passion, but gradually brightened as Molly, by dint of sympathetic questions and very feeling remarks concerning the joys of domesticity and family life, led him to deliver a long and eloquent harangue dealing with suburban residences in general, the needs of the inmates, and little arrangements both of a useful and artistic nature which, if supplied in the proper quantities, greatly added to the felicity of the household. Attached to Buckingham Palace, whose interior had been already described by him, was a vegetable garden, eight yards by five, in which onions, potatoes, radishes and cabbages could be sown. Land was a decided attraction, as he could work at it in his spare hours, and thus keep the family supplied with vegetables throughout the year. Indeed, for the sake of the mere feeling of possession, he longed to be a property owner, longed to be able to look round and say, "All this is mine; no man has a right to a morsel of it except myself and my wife."

131B continued with glib and enthusiastic phrases to depict the pleasures of such a life,

while Molly listened enraptured, mentally assuring herself that such a man was wasted on Kate. She could not appreciate his fine mind, with its rare understanding of the proper kitchen requirements, nor his tasty ideas as regards the ornaments of the parlour — essential beauties of the nature of a gilt clock decorated with marble figures, protected by a glass shade, artificial bouquets of flowers, stuffed robins and wrens, blithe cheerful mottoes such as "Home, Sweet Home," "A Hundred Thousand Welcomes," "A Watched Pot Never Boils," etc. Such objects must, of course, accumulate gradually; it would be impossible for any family man to pay down sufficient money to secure them all at once. The gilt clock might first be acquired; it gave tone to any parlour, suggesting that its owner was a man of worth and wealth; then in the following year robins and wrens should be purchased, as they were both instructive and ornamental, teaching the young idea to shoot. Oh, there was no doubt as to the decorations of the parlour being extremely important, giving a man standing and position in the eyes of his neighbours, developing a taste for the beautiful in young people; and though the gradual purchase of these objects would cripple the family income for years to come, they would, on the other hand, be an incentive to saving and to the exercise of frugal methods.

About half-past ten in the evening 131B suddenly realised that for over two hours he had been talking to Molly as if she were his promised bride, he had been discussing with her the arrange-

ments of a house in a tone and manner that suggested in its warmth and deference that she was to be its mistress. He had been carried away by her sympathy, and "the cold sweat" that Kate had described as the necessary accompaniment of love-making broke out upon his forehead; but it was engendered by a fear that Molly might have misunderstood him, and so he bade her a brusque, rather uncivil good-bye and fled the kitchen.

When the sound of his footsteps had died away, and there was no fear of his return, she drew out the bog oak brooch from her pocket — it was never worn now — and contemplated the black cat sadly. In a little while she sniffed with a sonority uncommon in a Dubliner, whose nasal acoustics are as a rule extremely ineffective, then as the black cat's diamond eyes winked wickedly up at her a tremolo of sniffs followed one upon the other in quick succession, and two large tears, detaching themselves from her eyelids, slowly rolled down her cheeks.

In the meantime Kate was sitting in her room in a state of dumb misery. She, who had tried to steer a clear course and avoid regrets of any kind, was now being sucked down into their depths a second time. She wondered if she had been cursed in childhood, wondered, with the wonder common to many millions of people, why her lot was so much harder and more difficult than that of others. Sure that her own judgment was on the whole sound, she had confidently believed she could order her life in a way that was both happy and pleasant for herself and for her friends.

That certainty was rudely shaken on her arrival home from America, but confidence in herself had not been entirely destroyed till now when, for the first time, a feeling of fatalism, a sense of inevitable destiny took possession of her. It was no use struggling, she had tried in vain to do what was right; it would be better to let things take their course, better to lay down her arms and surrender at once to the invisible power.

In this quiet hour, when she was alone in her room, she saw her position quite clearly. The prospect of living with Tom for the rest of her life was repulsive to her; she shrunk from it; it made her, in certain wild moments during that hour when her mind's eye conjured up a vision of him in all his rubicund flabbiness, almost mad with fear. And yet he had very good qualities, and many people would envy her and think her a lucky woman. They would say with truth that you could not expect very much from a man. He was warm-hearted, and though perhaps truculent and fond of his own way, at least he would be kind. He was generous and open-handed, and would never drink his wages or keep them to himself; worst of all, he trusted her, believed she was a woman of her word and would keep her share of the bargain.

There was no way out that she could see; she could no more bring herself to break her word than she could bring herself to break a holy image on the altar of her church. She despised a woman who lightly, carelessly broke solemn promises as much as she despised weakness in men. And Tom

was not weak; she had not even the excuse that he did not fulfil her measure of a man. Oh, there was no escape; she was caught in a net woven by herself, and yet, as is usually the case in life, it was another and an unseen hand that had so tightly drawn the meshes round her.

When Kate was convinced that it was too late for her to draw back reaction set in; she felt she had been mean, almost cruel in her treatment of Tom, and owed him some reparation. If she were going to keep her promise she must keep it to the letter, return to the kitchen, show some graciousness, play her part gamely and pretend to an interest in the little house that seemed so like a cage to her, huddled away as it was in those interminable suburbs, a cage to which Tom would bring food and drink, a cage over which he alone had power and could close or open the door as he pleased.

A light was burning in the kitchen, but there was no sound of movement or of voices from it. Every few minutes a sigh, rather like the wail of a prowling cat, issued from the room; occasionally it was so faint the ear could scarcely catch it, but once it assumed a strong resemblance to certain high notes in Molly's voice. Kate, having listened attentively for a few minutes, on perceiving this resemblance hesitated no longer and marched into the kitchen.

Since the first large tear-drops had detached themselves from the eyelids numerous others had followed — soaking thoroughly the corner of a soiled apron. A pair of red eyes, tousled hair



and a miserable face met Kate's gaze and caused her to exclaim:

"So you're as bad as myself, only you're showing it more. Believe me, Molly, no man living is worth a pair of red eyes."

"'Tisn't a man exactly, 'tis — 'tis . . ."

"Oh, I know all about it."

"Indeed you don't."

"Ah, get on. Any one who looked at your face could see what's occurred."

Molly lifted her head and gave a moan of distress, sobbing out, "I didn't mean it, I did my best, but I can't help it."

Kate went over to her and patted her shoulder, saying gently, "I'm grieving for you, Molly; I know it's very hard. 'Tis the same as myself you are. You're engaged to Augustus, and you feel you've got to keep your word and go through with it though he is a jail-bird, though you'd sooner die than marry him."

"Indeed I wish I was getting married to him," lamented Molly; "I'd marry any man that'd give me a little home. Mad I am to have something of my own about me. Oh, if even Augustus was mine I'd be happy."

"Yerra, tell that to the crows," jeered Kate. "I don't believe the shabbiest, craziest girl in Dublin would pick up with that mean little creature, that jail-bird, that —"

"Stop!" Molly held up her hand, and her eyes were bright with annoyance as she continued. "You've spoiled every chance I ever had of getting married, Kate, and you know it. First Tom

came along and gave me this brooch, and . . . and . . . great friends we were till you stole him off me. Then you drove Augustus away and kept all the other men to yourself. Oh, you take every one's share. Long ago I'd have been married and well married but for your interference."

Kate was immeasurably astonished. It was news to her that she had stood between Molly and matrimony, and she had always believed that Tom disliked the latter, that in fact it was a mutual dislike, and she had endeavoured to keep them separated. The bog oak brooch was a startling proof of her error, and now, as she gaped foolishly at her friend, the importance of this gift gradually became plain to her.

"I'm going to give this brooch back to Tom," continued the other. "Oh, you needn't be afraid. I'm not a grabber like some I could name."

Kate hastened to speak soothing words, assuring Molly that she was far too handsome a girl to throw herself away on Augustus, and quoting flattering expressions of esteem used by Tom in speaking of her, expressions that Kate's imagination coloured considerably. But it was quite true that he had used a certain number of them, as his method of courtship was an indirect one, a method which is, however, occasionally practised by experienced individuals like policemen and other knowledgeable persons. He had wooed the latter by paying compliments to her friend, and Kate, who was learned in all the psychological aspects of man, had seen through this game at the time and was much amused by it, holding, perhaps rightly,

that it was not in that particular form a very effective method of procedure. She did not therefore cast it aside; on the contrary, she determined to make use of it, but in a decidedly different and more formidable manner.

Molly naturally began to praise 131B on learning of his praise of her, and three evenings later when he called again Kate very delicately conveyed these admiring remarks to him, and in this case also her tongue ran away with her a little. Indeed, for over an hour she expatiated on the beauties of Tom's mind and person as detailed by Molly, bringing these flattering statements to an effective close by marvelling at her friend's blindness to the numerous imperfections of soul and body from which Tom suffered, and which were apparent to any fool with an eye in his head.

Naturally, as a sergeant of the D.M.P., and as one who was held in high honour by his colleagues, 131B was greatly piqued by this conversation, and very justly resented Kate's candour. For the basis of love, for the average man and woman, is vanity, and love-making is to a certain extent a practice instituted by nature for the cultivation of self-esteem — a highly valuable quality essential to human progress — and for the discovery within ourselves, through the agency of another person, of a divinity not possessed, in the remotest particle, in our fatuous belief by ordinary mortals.

Tom was both hurt and pleased at the remarks of his prospective bride, and his feelings being of such a mixed nature he took his departure without having achieved the object of his visit, without

having laid an important proposal before Kate. He was anxious to arrange that she should accompany him to Ranelagh one afternoon, and having inspected Windsor, Buckingham Palace and Balmoral, assist him in deciding which of these little houses would be best suited to their requirements.

This problem was so much on his mind he called the next night again and found Molly alone in the kitchen. They fell into agreeable conversation at once, discussing with much zest the theme nearest their hearts.

Molly informed Tom that she had always been interested in houses, and that it was her habit to look at them as she passed along the street and wonder how they were furnished and decorated within. She was fond of contrasts. In Lower Leeson Street, for example, there were some drab brown and grey mansions of a most uninteresting appearance, but side by side with them was quite a remarkable specimen of architecture of a pale green colour, and next it was a brilliant red brick building just like a doll's house in appearance. Molly was fond of promenading up and down outside it and liked to gaze at it with a thoughtful eye, picturing its interior to herself, and planning out for it an effective scheme of wall papers and furniture.

Curiously enough, 131B took the same delight in the study of houses of various kinds, and having something of the spirit of a collector always marked down mansions of a striking appearance that he came across in his beat. He was at some pains to impart his impressions of them to Molly,

and asked her to go out with him one afternoon and contemplate in his company some remarkable buildings on the north side of the city.

The invitation had only just been made and accepted when Kate appeared, and Tom, recollecting the real object of his visit, asked her at once, with some embarrassment, when she would come out with him to Ranelagh and choose a home.

Disease may be sometimes developed by mere mental suggestion, and perhaps the ailment, which Kate proceeded to complain of, was caused by too much study of "Chats with the Doctor," that notable page in *Erin's Own*. Anyway, she informed 131B that she could not stir out of the house because she was suffering from inflammation of the great toe and did not know when she would be free from it. However, as the matter in question was rather urgent, perhaps Molly would not mind going out with him and selecting the little home.

Molly agreed to perform this service for the two of them because of her devotion to Kate, after some simpering and some protest in regard to her own feebleness of mind and inability to perceive what was good or bad in the arrangements of a house, and after she had elicited by this method many gallant compliments from Tom.

Accordingly, one fine Sunday afternoon they set out for Ranelagh, and spent two happy hours in a rather dirty suburban street, which was in both their opinions a paradise of gentility. The problem of selection being a difficult one, dusk had fallen before they could come to a decision. Each



of the three residences inspected by them consisted of four rooms; each, however, had certain advantages the other did not possess. Attached to Buckingham Palace was the largest strip of land, but Windsor was supplied with an apparatus for heating water, and therefore cleansing operations would be considerably facilitated in such a house. On the other hand, Balmoral rejoiced in a bow window, which was very choice in Molly's opinion and would give distinction to any parlour.

When the time for decision came Tom very gallantly left it in her hands, and without any hesitation she voted for the bow window and Balmoral. He acclaimed the excellence of her taste, and she the breadth of his views in domestic matters, and they returned home very pleased with themselves.

They reported the result of their deliberations to Kate, who expressed herself satisfied, but asked them to go out on the following Sunday and measure the width of the kitchen and the parlour. Molly was quite ready to oblige, and they spent another very happy afternoon in Balmoral. Going home in the tram he told her how grateful he was for the trouble she had taken, and then, suddenly changing the subject, remarked sadly, "Kate tells me you're a wonderful cook, that there's not one in Dublin to touch you, that you're far better than herself."

"I don't know about that," Molly modestly replied.

"Far better than herself," insisted Tom, and muttering "a wonderful cook" relapsed into si-

lence. It lasted only a minute or so, then, perhaps impelled by his theme, the perfect cook, he began again, looking at his companion with moist eyes:

"Oh, Molly, if only things were some way different. If I could spend not one afternoon but every afternoon with you. If we could ever and always be together — if —"

"Ah, whist, Tom, whist. 'Tisn't right, 'tisn't fair, because — seemly I'm that way of thinking myself."

131B was seized with a desire to demonstrate his fervent feelings by catching hold of her arm or waist. Unfortunately this action could not be carried into effect because of the presence of a young ragamuffin, who climbed into the empty tram at this moment, and sitting down opposite the couple, and keeping his eye fixed on them, whistled pensively, "Take me back to your Garden of Love."

Molly, nobly reminding 131B of his duty to Kate, begged him in a whisper not to upset her by talking in that disturbing way; and before she reached Hatch Street she managed to obtain a promise from him to the effect that he would not torment her ever again with expressions of an affectionate nature; she could not bear them, preferring, as she assured him in the phrase of a novelette she had just read, to let "her wounded heart bleed in silence, drop by drop."

The imagination of 131B was fired by the lamentable and sanguinary picture thus evoked, and by the nobility of soul that suffered this amazing drainage so quietly and so unpretenti-

ously, making no merit of it. All doubt was set at rest. Molly was a beautiful soul, a fitting wife for any anxious, careworn administrator of the law. Her self-sacrifice, her purity of mind and her extraordinary powers as a cook were a subject for blissful musing; and for hours together 131B, when on his beat in the wet, muddy streets, rapturously pictured to himself such a woman as mistress of his home. There were, of course, bad times during those lonely hours when he hated Kate, and once or twice was seized with an unnatural desire to seek her out, catch her by the throat and beat her head against the floor. Yet his feelings were quite pleasant when he was actually with her, because she talked continually of Molly and her charms and qualifications as a wife, and discussion of their own engagement and their own future was tacitly permitted to lapse. They did not see each other so very often, as for many weeks Kate, though quite active in the house, did not stir abroad, because inflammation of the great toe still persisted. In consequence, Molly was able to go out more frequently, and took advantage of every opportunity that presented itself for increasing her intimacy with Tom. She was no longer afraid of him: she was only afraid of herself, his simple domestic soul stirring up wild yearnings in her of a vague unaccountable nature that puzzled and at times distressed her. When he was on duty and she was free she would often spend her time observing him from the shadow of a doorway or the corner of a street. It was very pleasant to observe and to be unseen, and the

inspection was carried out under a kind of mathematical system whereby the great man was surveyed from every angle in the course of an hour, and so successfully he never once caught a glimpse of the watcher.

Quite suddenly Kate recovered from her ailment and announced that she would go out the following Sunday afternoon and test her tender feet. Molly had planned to spend an hour or two at Balmoral in company with Tom on that particular day and was a little disappointed. However, in place of this expedition she invited him to spend the afternoon with her in the kitchen.

He was to come late so that he need not meet Kate, whom he now avoided on every possible occasion. Unfortunately she was slow to start, and loitered about the kitchen, though dressed in her outdoor things, playing in a maddening way with her sewing machine. It was no use suggesting that she was losing the fine spring sunshine and all the best of the day, she could not be persuaded to stir, and even relinquished her ostentatious play with the machine, and sat there idly drumming with her fingers on the table, and staring up through the window at the area railings.

When 131B did eventually put in an appearance she rose and greeted him in a friendly way, telling him she was going out at once and was very sorry to miss him. Both he and Molly looked relieved; the frown that was gathering on his forehead vanished, and he wished her a pleasant outing.

They were not so easily rid of her, however. With her fingers on the door handle, she paused

and turned round, so that she could see their faces quite clearly while she herself remained in the shadow.

"Well, Tom, what day will you get married? 'Tis time we fixed it up," she said quite casually, as if she were making a remark about the weather.

Molly exclaimed, "Oh — oh," and two little spots of tomato-red suddenly blushed upon her cheeks. 131B hung his head, tore at his moustache, coughed and spat tremulously, spat quite without the swift decision, which in his case, usually characterised this particular act.

"Kate — Kate," he began in a supplicating voice, "I'm bothered — I — don't know. . . . I've been meaning to tell you — I — I'm not the man you think me. I'm a deceiver. . . . I've lost money at betting." The last words came out with a gasp.

"Oh, what girl would mind being poor and she winning you for her own," returned Kate. "Well, anyway, think it over. I'll be gone a half hour. You can tell me the date when I come back; the sooner it is the better."

"The sooner it is the better," groaned 131B, as Kate disappeared from view. "Oh, my God, Molly, what will I do? What can I do? I don't want to marry her. I can't go through with it, and I can't throw her over when I'm promised to her. And she's that trustful! She believes in every bit of me."

"I wonder is that so," mused Molly. "I'm sure she doesn't."



"Indeed she does. I wouldn't have her think me two-faced for anything. And it's all a lie about the betting," he continued hysterically. "I've been saving money, not losing it. And it's for you I saved it. I want to marry you so bad. And I will marry you. I don't care what occurs. I will — I will."

"You will? Oh, Tom, 'twould be lovely; we'd be so happy, you and I living together in Balmoral . . . myself and yourself with a little house of our own . . . ever and always together. . . ." As she let her head slide into a comfortable position just above his heart, and as she felt his hairy face brushing against her own, the area door softly whined, and as his arms went round her, and as she again contentedly murmured, "Ever and always together," Kate walked into the room.

They leaped apart, and 131B, having succeeded in placing the table between himself and the two ladies, proceeded to stand first on one leg and then on the other. A cough and a spit could not cover up his confusion now; he gave utterance to various quavering sounds quite without coherence or form, and rolled his head from side to side in company with queer contortions of his body, for he wriggled like an expiring fish and glared so horribly at Kate she begged him to look the other way and quiet himself. He obediently turned his face to the wall, and once relieved of the sight of Kate recovered some of his courage, and in a little while was able to address her.

"I didn't mean to betray you, Kate," he began. "You don't understand what occurred. Molly knocked her head against mine. Oh, a fine crack she gave herself all by mistake. And I was trying to find the wound and see was she bleeding. Her hair got in the light and somehow I forgot. I thought 'twas you, not Molly, and I — I —"

"Now come here the two of ye and do it again."

"Do what again?"

"Oh, all that hugger-mugger. 'Twill ease your brain."

"I couldn't. Why, I'm promised to you, Kate." 131B drew himself up proudly and continued: "I'd go through Hell before I'd break my solemn promise."

"You needn't trouble to do that," she returned coolly. "Oh, Tom Casey, aren't you the foolish man? Wasn't it the date of your wedding with Molly I was striving to fix? But maybe you want to settle it up between yourselves. So I'll cut my sticks out of this."

A few minutes later Kate hurried down Hatch Street and Pembroke Street and then along the south side of the square. She was flying from Tom's panegyrics of herself. He had been much touched by the noble nature of a woman who could deliberately, without any complaining, relinquish all claim on himself and Balmoral. It was inconceivable that any woman could bring herself to throw away such choice gifts from Heaven. He showed admirable self-control, however, forbearing to make any statement to this effect and

outwardly was humble enough in his gratitude for his release, assuring Kate that she was far too fine a girl for him.

The latter, having suggested that this remark cast a reflection on his future bride, retired from the kitchen, fearing perhaps that further unwise or foolish statements might be made that would be regretted afterwards.

She was pleased at her success, and yet she was not happy. A stupid discontent that had annoyed and perplexed her for some time past tormented her again now that she was alone. She was dissatisfied and afraid to give her thoughts free play. If only she could reach the fields, if she could get away from men, women and houses, the fresh sweetness of the day might soothe her and bring back the old content. She walked along beside the canal, passing rows of red and brown brick houses, passing under bridge after bridge, taking little heed of the couples that strolled by her, and not even stopping to gaze at a cluster of Salvation Army enthusiasts grouped about a harmonium, singing hymns to a sprinkling of ragamuffins on the opposite bank. At another time she would have paused to stare at this rare spectacle, paused to wonder at their musical efforts, and to wish that they would use a concertina instead of that hoarse harmonium; it would make the noise, in her opinion, so much more cheerful.

The canal waters were still and greasy, and a faint odour occasionally arose from those places where the remains of a drowned dog brushed against the grassy bank. But in a little while she

began to leave the houses and the people behind her, and the waters became fresh and limpid, free from garbage, with a gentle current running through them. Evening was coming on; there were gold lights in the sky, a rim of mist edged the horizon, and the noise of the city she was leaving behind her died into a low murmur.

On the left hand were some close-cropped fields and groups of leafless trees, and beyond them, far away, high, purple mountains. The feeling of dissatisfaction growing more acute, she turned from the mountains and slipped down a deep bank which bordered the canal at this point. A bush of hawthorn growing at the end of a small garden and overhanging the stream on the opposite side, caught her eye. It was the first she had seen in flower, and the fragrance of the white blossom floated across the waters to her. A bird was singing in the branches. She leant against a bank gazing dreamily at it, the song mingling with her thoughts in a curious way.

It was an invitation to be happy, and how could she be happy living in this big, drab town with its little oasis of green — budding trees in back gardens, smooth lawns, bushes of lilac and laburnum that would soon break into flower in the squares, and would torment her with their joy, and prevent her from forgetting that beyond the chimney-pots and squalid streets there were miles of open country — wild hills and woods, grass fields and acres of corn land stretching away and away to the edge of the sea. But even if it were possible to forget it was unlikely that the old content would

come back. Nearly every day when she was out shopping, shabby people, with thin, drawn faces, passed her in the street, and the hungry look in their eyes troubled her, causing her to feel that by rights she should be in her own place assisting Denis in his work. Food was dearer than ever; young and old needed bread. She was strong and healthy. For the sake of these poor people she should take up her share of labour in the earth. Denis was going to be married in three weeks' time. He would not require a woman in the house. Still, he could give her work on the farm. She had refused to go to the wedding, she would write and tell him she had changed her mind.

A few strollers passed along the road that ran above where Kate was resting, but she remained undisturbed in the hollow. And her thoughts were busy with the old problem. Would the memory of Michael and of Steve press in upon her and destroy her peace if she lived on at Droumavalla? Some time or other she would have to face Eugene also. She could not tell how she would feel or how she would act until she was back in her home. The craving for the land was so strong in her now that she felt she could face any pain rather than the weary distress she must inevitably suffer if she continued to live on in the city. It would be better to return, better to spend a little time, at any rate, in Droumavalla until her hunger for the fields and the open spaces was, in a measure, satisfied again.

She rose and began to retrace her steps. It was very late. The lights had gone out of the



sky; in their place was a wash of pale primrose; the bird had ceased singing, and the long shadows of the trees fell across the waters. A tremulous web of blue vapour had crept down from Kilmashogue mountain veiling the fields; there was not a breath of wind, nothing to disturb the serenity of the spring evening, and at last Kate felt at one with the peace and quiet around her.

## CHAPTER XVII

ONE cold, wet morning Kate started on her long journey south. The carriage, in which she was sitting, was crowded; but people got out at various small stations and their places were not filled again. Soon there were only three other occupants of the compartment beside herself. One of them was a thin, pale-faced man, who sat huddled in a corner, wrapped in a shabby greatcoat. He gazed out of the window, apparently absorbed by the passing landscape, and disinclined for conversation. The two other travellers, who were studying newspapers, were more prosperous in appearance. Kate believed them to be father and daughter, for the woman resembled the elderly man in features and the last initial on her bag corresponded with the one on his suit-case. On the other hand, he was florid in complexion and inclined to be stout, whereas she was thin and colourless with prominent teeth like the keyboard of a piano. They evidently did not intend to be sociable and help to make the time pass with conversation, so Kate, as was her custom with strangers, proceeded to imagine their history and to christen them according to the impression they made on her and in conjunction with the initial on their boxes. They were Mr. and Miss Jenkins and they came from Wales. The white-faced man in the corner was

certainly a southerner. She had caught the lilt of his voice as he bade some one good-bye at Kingsbridge. And surely his name was Murphy, that commonest of all Cork names. He looked like a seedy draper's assistant, and the other man was probably a merchant, his rather purple complexion suggesting that he traded in salt meat, and his gold watch chain that he had made a little fortune. Soon tired of speculation, Kate turned from them to the window and gazed out at the drifting rain and the boggy plains through which they were passing. She summoned to her mind's eye the gorse-covered hills, the rich corn land, the deep winding valleys and rivers of County Cork, comparing them very favourably with the country that, without break, without undulation, stretched away for miles and miles on either hand.

At length the silence in the carriage was broken by Mr. Jenkins reading to his daughter a paragraph from the newspaper. His voice was loud and his manner of speech rhetorical; the words trickled out slowly and pompously, and Kate caught the drift of them perfectly in spite of the roar of the train.

"Ireland has refused to do her duty in the War," he read. "She has lost the respect and good-will of the allied countries, and that loss will react against her interests in all the affairs of life. . . . The British democracy will reject her claims with sullen scorn. She has lost America's friendship. Her emigrants will find the doors of the whole English-speaking world banged against them. Her trade will suffer in every English mar-

ket. The punishment she deserves will be meted out to her. England will say, and rightly, preference must be given to our friends, not to our enemies, and Ireland has ranged herself definitely on their side." Mr. Jenkins paused, and, a note of pleasant anticipation creeping into his voice, remarked with a comfortable snort, "These Irish fellows are dirty cowards. There'll be a heavy hand on them after the War. Oh, won't we just make them pay through the nose. Listen to this, Daisy." He read another paragraph, almost shouting the last two sentences, and eyeing the little man in the corner significantly, as if he intended them to be for his especial benefit.

"Ireland stinks in the nostrils of the nations. In future the son of an Irishman will mean the son of a coward."

"That's a lie," Kate spoke so fiercely Mr. Jenkins shrank back in his seat, staring up at her over his glasses with solemn alarm. She had leaped to her feet, and stood in front of him trembling and swaying a little to the vibrations of the train.

"Hundreds of Irishmen have been killed and crippled in the War," she cried; "and you're going to punish their wives and their children, their old fathers and mothers. Ah, 'tis easy to hurt the dead; there's no one to defend them. And when you punish the Irish you punish the men that are after dying for you. What right have you to call the fine boys that are gone cowards and their children the sons of cowards. . . . Because that's what you're doing. . . .

Haven't we our losses as well as you have your own?"

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," Mr. Jenkins cut in curtly, "you Irish have lost nothing to speak of — you've made money."

"That's a lie. My best friends have been killed on the sea and in the battle — Joe Canty, the Moriartys, the O'Briens, the Roches, Michael Turpin — and — and Steve was no coward." Her voice broke into a sob, and leaning forward she snatched the newspaper from the old man's hand and tore it into little bits, then sinking back into the corner turned away and pressed her face against the glass so that he could not see her tears.

They spoke to each other in low tones. She was not able to hear what they said, but they did not molest her, and gradually her trembling ceased; she became calm again.

The train began to slow up, stopping beyond Limerick Junction for a few minutes, then it was shunted into the station. The strangers collected their wraps, the woman got out of the carriage, and the old man, just as he was leaving it, paused.

"I beg your pardon, ma'am," he said awkwardly; "I must apologise for disturbing you — I — er —"

She looked at his proffered hand and shook her head. With a shrug of his shoulders he descended on to the platform and was soon lost in the crowd.

Some people got into the carriage; there was the usual disturbances of new arrivals, the usual



stowing away of luggage, and it was not until the train had steamed out of the platform that she realised that the little white-faced man had given up his corner and was seated beside her.

"I want to thank you, miss," he said in a low voice, "for speaking the way you did and for not taking that man's hand."

"And why so?"

"Because he called me a coward."

"Are you a soldier?" She looked inquiringly at him.

"I was," he replied; "I was in France and I was in England a small while, and there was that same talk. 'The Irish are cowards,' they says; 'we'll make them pay for it. We'll punish them sore for standing back from the fighting.' I tell you there were times I was near out of my head with rage. The Yanks haven't lost half what we've lost when you take the size of the two countries; but the Yanks are heroes and the Irish are cowards."

"I know, 'tis very hard. Oh, there was one Michael Turpin that was in France," her voice faltered; "tell me, did you meet him?"

"No, I did not," he replied.

"How long were you out there?"

"A year and a half; a year and a half that was like ten — always fighting, always except for rests in the trenches. Indeed, I never thought I'd see home again."

"What part are you from? I can see you're a County Cork man."

"I am. I'm from Kinsale."

She pressed him to tell her more about himself, and, though he was diffident and shy, she at length prevailed upon him to tell his story. He had been greatly stirred by John Redmond's speech at the outbreak of war, and being an ardent Nationalist, and believing in the pledge given by the English, that Home Rule would be granted at the end of the War, he had joined the army and had served with the Connaught Rangers, one of the regiments stationed at Kinsale. It was largely composed of County Cork men, friends of his own, and, in spite of almost incessant fighting, there had been good times in France.

"They were grand boys, all of them," he said; "and I didn't know how fine they were till the twenty-first of March this year, when our battalion of the Rangers was wiped out, and they fighting to save Paris and the ports. There was one young lad, a County Cork gentleman, in command of my company. He was only twenty, the youngest of six brothers all out in the War. He'd been with us in the thick of the fighting for near two years, and we would have followed him anywhere. He loved the men and cared for them like a mother. The Colonel wanted him to go back to Ireland for a rest, but he wouldn't leave us. We doated on him. His face was like an angel's and he had the heart of a lion for courage. He was the whitest man I ever knew. As long as I live I can never forget him, and I pray that he may be near me in the hour of death to lead me beyond. Well, on the twenty-first of March he led us out again to face the German onrush, and he soon

fell killed at last. It near broke my heart, and the boys were mad with grief for him. Others followed him quick enough. We were fighting rearguard actions all that week. The Rangers went into the battle on the twenty-first a thousand strong, and after seven days of it there were seven whole men left. The Dublins were destroyed too. A great number of Irish boys were lost that time. But sure the British are forgetting it already. You heard what was in that paper?"

He broke off, too moved to speak further. In a little while, however, Kate could not resist questioning him again, and she learnt that during that wonderful retirement he had been wounded and had suffered severely from shell shock. He was now invalided out of the army and was going home. But the prospect of home depressed him infinitely.

"They're mad with me for fighting for the British," he said. "My father is bitter because we've been done out of Home Rule, and he wrote and told me there would be no place for me under his roof. And the English were mad with me because I'm an Irishman. My old friends in Kinsale will give me the go-by. Oh, it's all a queer puzzle. . . . I don't rightly know what will become of me."

Kate perceived that her companion was very broken down, and, pitying him, she tried to reassure and console him with prophecies of the welcome that was before him, the welcome that was due to any brave man. And yet she realised that when old John Turpin was afraid to hang the

photograph of his son on the wall of his house the feeling against Irish soldiers must be strong indeed. She had not time to say much to him, for the train was racing down the hill between Mallow and the southern capital. Soon she saw Shandon steeple and the wide curve of the valley in which the city lay; then with a rush and a roar they were in the long tunnel which leads into Cork station. After that, with Denis gesticulating in the distance and struggling through the crowd on the platform, she had only time to bid her companion traveller a hasty good-bye; and so they parted as travellers part, not to meet again, but each bearing with them the memory of their hour of talk, and Kate's mind branded by it, for as she listened to the conversation of the soldier the burning recollection of the quarrel between Michael and Steve impressed itself upon her again, and with it returned the conviction that the two brothers who could not pardon each other could find no share of rest or peace in the grave.

## CHAPTER XVIII

THE day following Kate's arrival home was a busy and a happy one. She heard about the preparations for the wedding from Minnie Foley, and later in the day went over the farm with Denis, and commented on the many improvements he had been able to make, thanks to agricultural prosperity, and also because he had been able to save money through the agency of the Co-operative Society started by Eugene. The latter's energy, business capacity and resource, which had brought such an organisation into being, were much praised by him. He told his sister that though Eugene would have nothing to do with politics he was respected by all the farmers of the surrounding district, who had come to regard him as their leader, and by right of intellect he had become their spokesman and representative in all the business affairs connected with the Society.

It was near milking time, and Denis and Kate strolled up the gorse field in the direction of the cow-house. After a short silence he inquired shyly, "You had no thought, Kate, when you were in Dublin of getting married?"

"Maybe I had," she replied, "but I have none now."

"You're too careful. I was like yourself; I was afraid of it, and afraid of being tied one time,



but now I'm not a bit. Indeed, I know a woman living over at Ballycotton. She's eighteen children, and she married on the grass of one goat. As fine a woman as you'd wish to see and as happy as a bee. So why would you be afraid?"

"I'm tired of Ireland," she said suddenly, facing him; "and as soon as the War is over and I'm free to cross the sea I'll go back to the States."

"'Twould be a pity, a rare pity," he replied, greatly troubled by her decision of manner and voice, but he knew Kate better than to argue with her, and made no further remark.

She had surprised herself. Her answer had not come from any preconceived plan; it was the impulse of the moment, and yet it seemed the natural conclusion for her to arrive at, and she wondered she had not thought of it before. "It's the land makes the man," Eugene had said. It made the woman also. She had no farm of her own, so there was no place for her here; she must seek her bread elsewhere, and take to the winding track again.

They had now reached the top of the hill. Some fine Kerry cows passed them, and Denis, as he patted their sleek sides, related their histories, and told her there was no cow better suited to that part of the country, and advised her if she ever had a farm of her own to stock it with this breed.

"Wouldn't you try your hand at milking them?" he suggested when they were stalled. "I remember the time you'd milk twenty cows before breakfast and not turn a hair."

She laughed, saying, "Sure, my hands would fall to my sides lifeless if I milked four cows now."

"Well, here's a pail anyway. Put your hand to it and see what you can do."

Her fingers were not as stiff and feeble as she expected, and she milked away for nearly three-quarters of an hour without feeling fatigued. A soft ray of light from the setting sun crept in through the half-open door, casting a yellow bar of dancing colour across the animals' backs. In a half-musing state, with her hands busily moving up and down, she listened to the spurt of the milk and watched the flicking to and fro of the cows' tails.

A man entered the cow-house and stood in the ray of light near the door. Kate, suddenly looking up and perceiving him, rose quickly from her crouching position, exclaiming "Eugene!" Her violent movement upset the half-filled pail of milk, and a white trickle rolled along the ground at her feet.

"So you're back," he said with an embarrassed air; "I was looking for Denis. I've business with him."

"He's over in the dairy," she replied. "Wait now, he may not be there. I'd best go and find him."

Eugene, who had turned to leave the barn, waited for her, and they went out into the fresh evening together. They did not go in the direction of the dairy, but stood for a while a few paces from each other, with faces averted.

At length Kate broke the distressing silence

with what seemed to her a foolish remark as soon as it sounded in her ears:

"It's strange you can find time to come over at this hour of day. You can't have much work on the farm. But maybe, you've business to do for your new Society."

"I have not," he replied. "Indeed, I've my hands full at home, and I could ill spare the time to come here."

"I wonder your business with Denis couldn't have waited. You'll see him to-morrow at Mass."

"It could not; it's urgent."

"Ah, here's Denis," she exclaimed. "Denis, Eugene has urgent business with you."

Denis came over to them from the yard gate, saying, "Business? Well, now, what urgent business can you have with me, Eugene?"

"I have none at all," he replied shortly.

Both brother and sister stared at him puzzled, and Kate noticed that as he lifted his eyes to hers there was a look of authority in them she had never seen in the old days.

"I'd best tell you straight what I came for," he replied. "I wanted to know if Kate would see me and have a talk."

"And why didn't you ask me that at once?" she inquired.

"Oh, maybe you wouldn't have cared to answer it."

"Well, I'll answer it," broke in Denis. "Eugene, Kate wants to hear about the new Society. Go off with her now and show her the shop and the mill."

"I've been wanting to hear about the new Society and about yourself," she said, beckoning to him. After a moment's hesitation he joined her, and they set out for the village together.

His embarrassment slipped from him as he explained to her the workings of the Co-operative Society, and how each farmer had his share and stake in it; how politics were strictly kept out of it, and how the good of the whole was brought about by the work of each individual member. The shop, which he took her over, interested her and pleased her, and she was greatly excited by the plans he had for its development in various departments. For he hoped that in time it would supply nearly all the essential requirements of the people at low prices.

As they strolled inland, away from the village, in the direction of the mill, he told her the tale of his struggle with the ignorance and the prejudices of the people, and the bitter opposition of tradesmen and politicians when he first attempted to start the Society, and she listened to him gladly as he talked, noting with pride the improvements in his appearance — his handsome face, his confident air and the fact that he limped less than formerly.

"I went to see a doctor in Cork," he said; "he's a clever chap, not like an old cob of a country doctor who has never seen civilisation. He's given me great ease, and he says he'll have my leg cured in four or five months, and then I'll be as game as paint."

The mill was in a valley, surrounded by trees, with a little river flowing by it. The building was

an old one that had been patched up and had had new machinery installed in it. They lingered on a bridge that led up to its gate, leaning over the rail and gazing down at the shallow current of water playing over the stones beneath them. As dusk came on they began to talk of old times, Kate pointing out chestnut trees which Steve and Michael used to climb and strip bare of their fruit in the autumn, and reminding Eugene of one occasion when he had cried because he was too small to follow his brother up the trunk, and could not even reach the lowest branches. She spoke of the bond between the two elder brothers; how they always fought side by side against other boys in the village, and she went on to question Eugene about their quarrel and the manner of its commencement.

He told her how they would argue about the past history of Ireland, about the famine time, and he quoted the two disputants in turn.

“ ‘What did the English do in the black ’47?’ says Steve. ‘The potato crop had failed, but there was enough corn grown in the country to feed every man, woman and child in it, and give them plenty for the year. But the poor people had to pay the corn in rent and taxes, and it was all shipped out of the country. I tell you,’ says he, ‘a million Irishmen and Irishwomen died of starvation in one year, and it’s a wrong that can never be forgiven. The English Government could have forbidden the corn to go out of Ireland, says the history book, and no man, woman or child need have gone hungry. But they encouraged the



big merchants to buy the corn for high prices and ship it away; they wanted to starve the people out of Ireland.'

" 'That's all past and gone,' says Michael.

" 'It's only half a century away,' says Steve. 'Would you fight for the children of those murderers? You can't deny that it's truth.'

" 'Oh, it's true enough,' says Michael. 'The English Government by their laws condemned a million Irishmen and women to death in one year. They let the Irish rot and die in their hour of need. But wouldn't it be a fine thing and a big thing if the Irish stretched out the helping hand to the English now in their hour of need? If they heaped red coals of fire on their heads?'

" 'Ah, the English have short memories. They'll forget it as soon as it's done,' says Steve. And he'd a deal more talk I'm forgetting now."

"And what were your thoughts at the time?" asked Kate.

" 'Twas all a big puzzle to me," Eugene replied. "But when I read in the papers of the bad treatment of the good priests and nuns in Belgium I went mad. 'I'll have the Germans' blood for this,' says I, and away with me to the Cork barracks to enlist. They kept me waiting there with a hundred or more fellows the length of three days. And at the finish they said they didn't want us; they turned us away. 'Twas six months later I got the hurt at the hurling."

There was a pause in the conversation, but they resumed it as they climbed the hill on their way back to Rathmore. Kate gave Eugene an account

of the man who had read the newspaper aloud in the train, and she told him of the threats of punishment for Ireland and the Irish, and the epithet with which they were to be labelled, and, having finished her tale, she said bitterly, "When they call Irishmen cowards they call brave lads like Michael, who gave his life for them, cowards. And now the newspaper says they're going to punish us all. Seemly the English have forgotten that the flower of the Irish race went out and fought and died for them."

Eugene interrupted her, "Wait a while, Kate, and listen to me. The punishment of the Irish is only newspaper talk."

"The papers can't tell lies. Isn't it printed word?"

"They write a deal they don't mean. Anyways, we're simple people. It's best take no sides but tend the farm and not mind them. What good is there in splitting our heads over it, and breaking our hearts with bitterness?"

"Maybe, you're right," she replied, and then Michael and all else were forgotten as a sudden wave of delicious happiness swept over her. He had said, "It's best take no sides but tend the farm and not mind them." And the tone of his voice had implied that the farm was theirs, not his alone. Perhaps he would have spoken more plainly as he walked beside her if she had given him encouragement. It was beyond her power to do so. She was helpless in the grip of her joy.

It had all come to her in a flash. She did not want the farm for herself, but she wanted badly to

share it with Eugene. At his least touch, at the brush of his coat against her dress, she trembled as she walked beside him. His words had revealed to her how she loved him, and with it came the recognition that this smothered love was at the root of her discontent with life.

When he said good-bye at the gate and asked her to come over to Coomacarn the following day, she answered him carelessly enough, telling him that she might come if she were not too busy with the preparations for Denis' marriage. And though she was quite conscious of her own coolness, she would not correct it, fearing she would lose all mastery of herself, and she was still reluctant, even if it were possible, to yield to his power over her. So strong was this power, she hated to see him leave her and set out for Coomacarn alone. She wanted to walk with him along by the sea and up over the hill, and tell him how happy he had made her, tell him of her fears and hopes, of her discontent, and why she had left Dublin, and what were her motives in coming home. Then, when all was said, when the talk was over, watch him as he walked beside her and muse on the charm of his company, and loving every turn of his head, every movement of his figure, picture him as a leader of his countrymen.

It was a foolish fancy, for there are thoughts that can never be spoken, moods that cannot be expressed. Besides, there was still a barrier between her and Eugene, and she was afraid to face it, afraid that her hands were too weak to move it, her feet too feeble to surmount it, and that she

must fall back baffled. And so that she might not think of it she wandered through the out-buildings, calling Denis, seeking him for the sake of his conversation and his company.

In the evening two young men, Dan and Willie Foley, cousins of Minnie, came to Rathmore in company with several other relatives. They all sat round the fire chatting pleasantly, and Dan spoke in terms of warm praise of Eugene, of his skill in conducting affairs, and of his tact as a leader. Then Willie began to talk politics, and he told Kate that they were going to raise a monument to the memory of Stephen Turpin in the village. It would be a very fine one, for there had been a generous response to the call for subscriptions. His name would thus be immortalised, and the monument would be there for hundreds of years to come, to remind men of one who had given his life for Ireland.

"Surely you'll put Michael's name on it too?" said Kate; "it has as good a right to be there as Steve's. Didn't Michael give his life for Ireland if ever a man gave it?"

"He did not," replied Willie; "he was no Irishman; he was an English soldier; he joined the army for the pay; the sooner he's forgotten the better."

"You're not speaking truth, Willie Foley," cried Kate. "Michael is of the one blood and the one nation with Steve and all the rest of us. And he's a right to have his name put on that monument as one who saved us from famine and slaughter."

“ Ah, what do women know about nations? ” snapped Willie, and turning to the others proceeded to talk of the heroism of Steve, and to urge upon them as a duty the task of keeping his name alive in the memories of the people of Droumavalla.

Kate could not bring herself to listen further, and saddened by the thought that division was again to be made between the two brothers, slipped away to her room.

It was a very still night; there was not even a gull crying from the river. The moon shone in through the open window, and frost whitened the fields outside. She stood for a moment gazing at this peaceful world, then lighting a candle went to a cupboard and drew out the old history book that had comforted her in her first sorrow. She read again of the days of oppression, when the fine flower of Irish manhood, determining not to be dishonoured by surrendering to harsh, tyrannical rule, had formed themselves into an Irish brigade and offered their services to France. She read of their many brave deeds and of the great charge they had made at Fontenoy, when, led by Patrick Sarsfield, they had won the day for the French. Patrick Sarsfield and many of his comrades had died on the field of battle — adventurers dying in a foreign land in foreign service. And Kate called to mind a story, told her by the soldier in the train, of another brave Sarsfield, one of the same race and name, who had quite early in the War led the Connaught Rangers into battle against hopeless odds. This time a Sarsfield had died



fighting for Britain and France. There had been unity at last; but there was still no unity in his own land.

What was hardest was the thought of the un-honoured dead. Here was Willie Foley, a young Irishman, who said that the sooner Michael was forgotten the better; that he was no Irishman. And Kate thought of the Englishman and of the words of the newspaper. They had threatened Ireland with punishment, and had attached to the name of her sons a vile epithet. Perhaps it was through ignorance they failed to differentiate. Sinn Fein meant Ireland and the word Sinn Feiner meant Irishman to them. And they did not even think of the few Sinn Feiners who had lost their lives in Dublin in Easter week; they thought only of the body of Sinn Feiners who had stayed at home, and refused to fight either for their own side or for the British.

It was all a strange puzzle and difficult to understand. Kate closed the old history book and put it by with a sigh.

The thousands of Irishmen who had fought and died in France, Gallipoli and elsewhere were in the same position in men's minds to-day as the Irishmen who had died at Fontenoy in the service of France — adventurers dying on foreign soil in foreign service. Yes, that was how men regarded them. Neither Irishmen nor Englishmen in the future would recognise that they had given their lives for the land they loved. Oh, theirs was a pitiful case, surely — to be regarded as mere mercenary adventurers of no nationality, their

birthright stolen from them. The dead of other nations would be honoured; these would be unhonoured and forgotten. Indeed, they were already dishonoured by the epithet of coward so falsely placed after the name of Irishman.

Dimly Kate felt these things, and her heart burned within her as she thought of the good men gone and of this scribbler for the newspaper who so wantonly insulted them by calling Irishmen cowards, and by saying that "Ireland would stink in the nostrils of the nations."

It was difficult to rest, the words floated through her mind in sleep and were with her when she woke in the early morning. And, though Eugene had asked her to come over to Coomacarn in the afternoon, she set out for it soon after breakfast.

She felt she must make an effort to throw down the barrier between them, she must learn if he too made the same division between Michael and Steve as these other men had made. Would he insult Michael by calling him no Irishman, would he go with those who wished him to be forgotten, who desired that the place of his birth should know him no more?

She had just left the farm when Denis hailed her. He had some work to attend to in a distant field, and they walked a part of the way together. She told him she was going to Coomacarn, and he began to talk of Eugene's subjection to his father. At the stile where they had to part he paused, saying as he placed a hand on the stepping-stone over which he was about to vault, "I wonder you didn't ever see what a strong man Eugene was to

stay on at the farm and bear his father's bullying without a word. Surely, if he had been weak, he'd have gone off with himself. And he'd be earning a poor labourer's wage now instead of having a fine farm of land, a good balance at the bank and he the leader of the whole countryside."

"Ah, Eugene is weak," replied Kate; "why didn't he hang his brother's likeness on the wall beside Steve? Why did he give in to his father on that?"

"'Twas no weakness, 'twasn't his wall," said Denis, adding with a laugh, "well, anyway, Eugene keeps away from political talk. Any Irishman who does that is a strong man. You can't deny it."

She did not attempt to deny it, and as she proceeded on her way she began to consider her brother's words and to wonder whether there was not a measure of truth in them. Eugene as a strong man was a new figure in her mind, but when she had contemplated it for a little while the old image, that had been in her opinion typical of weakness and of hesitancy, faded utterly, and, craving for the comfort of his strength and the wisdom of his speech, she quickened her steps, taking short-cuts, scrambling over hedges and ditches, wading through boggy places, hastening through the bright morning, and paying no heed to its gaiety, or to the soft sunshine that fluttered in and out of the sky.

A little below the brow of the hill above Coomacarn she paused to settle her dress and hair which had become disordered in her hurried walk.

Then, as she gazed down at the glittering expanse of sea, at the white house in the hollow of the slope, at the rich fields rolling away to the edge of the bog, at all the smiling land below her, she gave an exclamation of delight. Was this to be the real home-coming at last?

She was afraid to attempt to answer the question, and putting it from her mind searched for a way down the hill.

Eugene was working with two other men in a field near the house. As soon as he saw her he left his labourers and came towards her with a smile on his grave face and his hands stretched out to her in greeting.

"I'm glad you've come early, Kate," he said; "there are many things I've been wanting to say to you — things I couldn't say someway last night I was that light and happy in myself in being with you and near you."

"That's why I came so early. I couldn't rest, I wanted to talk to you. Eugene, I want your help; I want an advice from you badly." She broke off, and then because she wished for a few minutes of the exquisite pleasure of his company, the exquisite pleasure of seeing him the master, and because of her fear of his answer when she told him her trouble, she put off the moment for serious conversation by asking him to show her over the farm first.

As he walked beside her and showed her his cattle, the outhouses, the bit of garden, he explained his plans in connection with the farm, explained the line of its probable development,



related to her the future of each acre of ground. She delighted in all these details, discussing each problem as it presented itself in their walk, and making various suggestions which he welcomed. She went on to tell him how astonished she had been at his powers as a leader, how greatly she had admired his speech at the big meeting in Dublin, and how ashamed she was at ever having been so foolish as to believe him to be weak and without courage.

"Ah, Kate," he replied, "I'm no longer anybody's servant. I can use what brains I have to work the farm as I please. And it gives me a grand free feeling. I know now I can face up to any man. There's no dark fear, the fear of a man without a sod of land, to take the heart out of me and quell me down."

"You're a strong man, Eugene," she said; "and I was a stupid woman not to know it and to go off with myself to Dublin the way I did. But, indeed, there was another reason for my going besides yourself."

"'Twas better so. I had to make my own way first." He hesitated, and then went on, "Now that you say I've shown you I'm a man will you change your mind? Will you give the answer I want to the letter you got from me months ago?"

"I will — I will soon," she interrupted him, laying a detaining hand on his sleeve, her voice trembling. "Listen to me, Eugene. I want to tell you the trouble first; I want to tell you what's bothering me, what maybe will drive me to the States again, God help me."



"To the States?" He gave her a startled glance.

"It's about Michael and Steve," she went on, and so that he should not interrupt her she began rapidly to tell him of her fears for the two brothers, and of the night on Kilshanick bog when she had seen them hunting with their dogs.

"'Twas a strange thing," he murmured when she had finished her story, "but surely it set your mind at rest. Wasn't it a sign to show you their quarrel was over?"

"So I said to myself at first. Then I got doubtful about it, and I've been doubting ever since. I couldn't be sure it wasn't a dream, or that it wasn't in my mind I'd seen them there so often in the old days. Or maybe 'twasn't their real selves, 'twas only the cold end of the soul. Oh, I don't rightly know. I'm afraid for them. How can their quarrel be made up, how can they come together when now even a big difference is made between them down in the village? Michael's name isn't to be put on the monument beside Steve's. And every one says Steve is a hero, and all the young lads are ashamed of Michael, and say he's no Irishman, and that the best thing is to forget him."

"You're thinking they hate each other still and can't be happy because of it?" he asked.

"Oh, how can the dead rest easy if they keep up the quarrel here?"

"Will you come with me, Kate?" he answered; "I've something to show you."

She followed him into the house, and they

went along the passage and entered the kitchen where she had last seen his mother. Without saying a word he pointed to the wall in front of him.

Two new frames of dark wood had been purchased for the photographs of the two brothers, and they hung there side by side. They occupied the same position in regard to each other; neither the one nor the other had greater prominence.

"They're equal here, Kate," whispered Eugene as though he stood in a holy place. Then, after a brief silence, he resumed, "You needn't be afraid. Willie Foley came here and ordered me to take Michael off the wall, and he threatened me with boycott if I didn't. But I told him to go to Hell and pitched him out of the house. And that'll be the treatment I'll give to any one who comes to me with that kind of talk."

"Will they boycott you?"

"Not they. Willie tried to rise a row. But they know the Society will go smash without me, so they daren't touch me."

Kate went over to the wall, and taking down the two likenesses examined them closely. Then with a sigh she put them back again, saying:

"Poor Michael — poor Steve. Why are they all working to keep you divided?"

Eugene moved close to her, speaking in low, urgent tones. "Maybe we could bring them together. Oh, I'm sure we could."

"How could we do so?"

"If we worked the farm . . . you and I. Oh, Kate, why won't you be promised to me? Isn't

your road a lonely one? Isn't it a hard and bitter thing for me to live here by my lone? Why will you go from me again? What good is Coomacarn without yourself? After Ireland, you were always the first with Steve and Michael. Certain I am they'll come together if you'll help me to work the bit of Ireland that would have been theirs."

"Eugene," she replied, "I cared greatly for Steve and Michael. 'Twas because of that I came back from the States. I don't know which one I'd have married if they'd been here. But there's one thing I know now. The best of Steve and Michael is in yourself . . . and — and that's why I came back a second time . . . that's why I . . ."

He drew her to him and kissed her with the same passion as when he had tried to prevent her leaving him before.

"All the best is in you," she muttered, as she lay in his arms. "Oh, you could never have hated like them."

"I don't know. I'd have done bad and wicked deeds if the land had been taken from me, if Coomacarn had gone to Eily."

She laughed softly to herself. All three brothers cared for the same earth. However bitter was the quarrel between two of them in that they were as one. "They'll have equal shares here anyway," she said happily. "And you're sure we'll be helping them?"

"Michael and Steve had great love for you,

Kate, and they had great love for the land, so let your mind be easy. I'm thinking they'll know that you and I are working Coomacarn as best we can, and it will bring them peace surely."

"That's true," she replied. "They loved the land; they loved Ireland. And I'm praying that great love and ourselves working here in the old place will draw them together at the end of all."

They talked no more of the brothers. They gave themselves up to the enjoyment and wonder of their happiness, each relating to the other the tale of their dissatisfaction with life; Kate telling Eugene how tardily she had come to learn that this dissatisfaction took root in her loneliness and need of him, and how she longed to help in his work and to forget the past year, which, lived without him, seemed to her a time of waste and foolishness. He in his turn told her that she had helped him already, that he had worked as he never could have worked if she had not been in his mind. When his father and mother were alive the thought of her had saved him from despair, and later he had devoted his energies to the study of books and to the organisation of the Society so that he might prove to her his manhood. Then, when he had something to bring her, he had been met with her cruel refusal to see him in Dublin, and he had almost given up hoping, and could scarcely believe even now that he had won her back.

"Listen," she said; "I love you as I never could have loved Michael or Steve. I'm no good without you; my strength is gone from me; I can't

stand by myself. Just as you need to have the land at your back I need to have you at mine."

Time passed rapidly; several hours went by without either Eugene or Kate noticing the passage of the day. At length, however, the change in the light became noticeable, and she rose, and in spite of his protestations insisted that she must start for Rathmore before night fell.

The trees and hedges were already beginning to cast long shadows over the grass and the evening dews were rising upon the air as they strolled through the fields together. Kate found it difficult to realise that she had got back to the old life, and that her future would be lived with this man who walked beside her, this man who was so beautiful, so gentle and yet so strong. Her confidence in him and in her future was complete and abiding; she felt she could look to him for help and advice as she had not looked to any man before.

The beauty of the evening harmonised with her mood. She heard the voice of pleasure in the southern breeze, and in every bird's song seemed to lurk a joy. The promise of earth, the pledges of existence were everywhere about her. With the winter behind them the old glories came back in the old forms. Neither war nor the shadow of famine nor the menace of men's bitter quarrels could prevent the renewal of life, the return of spring.

Beside the little river that flowed down the hillside in the place where they had stood talking



over a year before, Eugene paused and took Kate's hand in his. The spirit of ecstasy had passed into his being; she felt him tremble, felt that he was trying to speak, but several minutes passed before he mastered his emotion. The words, when they came, were few and simple, sounding clearly above the babble of the stream.

"We'll live our life here together, and whatever comes we'll not forget the two boys. Michael and Steve will always be equal in Coomacarn."

She followed the motion of his arm with her eyes, gazing over the rich streak of country indicated by it, and her heart was full of a tranquil happiness as she pictured herself and Eugene bringing union again to the dead brothers by working together side by side in the land they loved. Whatever might have been their suffering she believed that now they would sleep quietly and peacefully; they would be at rest at last.

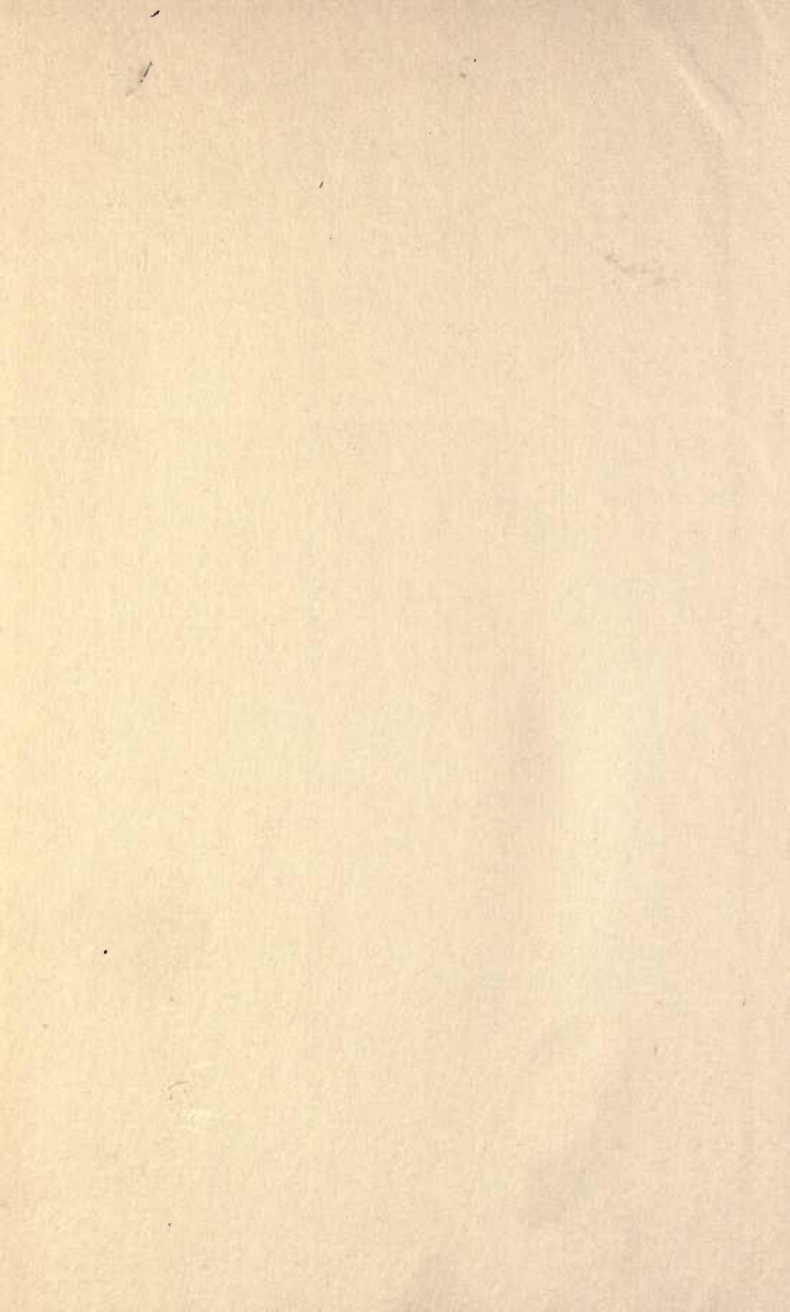
Union begets peace as surely as disunion begets strife. The strife may not be of a physical or material nature, but this much is certain — where there is division in a nation the people perish both mentally and spiritually. And the light of peace, the light of individual happiness and union is a beacon in the darkness, a beacon from which even the dead perhaps, from which at least some other lives with the same sympathies, the same ties of nature, must catch a faint reflection.

DUBLIN, *November 26, 1918.*

THE END

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